




Branas School

Complaints Policy

	Reviewed:
Written: September 2022	September 2023
Author: Tonia Lewis	Next review: September 2024
Role: Executive Head Teacher	
Implemented: Sep 2022	

CareTech's children's education services provide a safe and stimulating learning environment in which young people are always offered a fresh start, and empowered to achieve and fulfil their unique potential

1. Description and Ethos of Branas School

OUR CULTURE AND ETHOS

We are committed to providing a nurturing, safe and vibrant learning environment that fosters a love of learning and enables every student to become the best they can be. Respectful and supportive relationships are at the heart of all that we do: we value every member of the school community equally. We recognise that our pupils bring different experiences, interests and strengths, and we understand these will influence the way they learn. Therefore, we take a child-centred approach to education that recognises and responds to individual need. We celebrate effort and achievements and set high expectations. We are here to help our Learners learn the skills they need to become successful, motivated and resilient young adults who are fully equipped to make a positive contribution to society.

Branas Isaf operates an integrated model of care, education and therapy underpinned by the Good Lives Model. The school exists to improve the quality of life of our pupils both now and in their future. We specialise in supporting the Good Lives Model as a framework to offender rehabilitation, and as an underpinning therapeutic model across both care and education for the development of pupils.

The Good Lives Model (GLM) is grounded in the ethical concept of human dignity and universal human rights, and as such, it has a strong emphasis on human agency. That is, the GLM is concerned with individuals' ability to formulate and select goals, construct plans, and to act freely in the implementation of these plans. A closely related assumption is the basic premise that offenders, like all humans, value certain states of mind, personal characteristics, and experiences, which are defined in the GLM as primary goods.

OUR SCHOOL

Branas School is an Independent School operating within the Branas Isaf Company, a subsidiary of CareTech Community Services Ltd., who are the proprietors.

The school provides specialist education to boys aged 11 to 18 years with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, and who are Looked after Children.

OUR PUPILS

All young people in Branas School have a history of harmful behaviours and social, emotional and mental health needs often accompanied by a range of additional learning needs.

Most of the pupils have had interrupted histories in education and care. There are a wide variety of attainments on admission. All have fragile self-esteem and demonstrate difficulties with authority and a lack of trust in adults. Many have experienced loss and trauma, leading to attachment difficulties. As a

result, many experience difficulties in forming and maintaining appropriate, positive relationships with others and have a limited ability to work cooperatively.

Pupils are:

- aged 11 to 18;
- boys only;
- placed within the residential setting of Branas Isaf;
- residents from placing authorities throughout the United Kingdom;
- all present a range of harmful behaviours;
- Most are in receipt of an EHC plan or a Statement of SEN.

THE VISION

BELIEVE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE, ASPIRE

BELIEVE IN OUR TEAM AND IN OUR LEARNERS
EMPOWER OUR LEARNERS TO BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES AND THEIR PERSONAL JOURNEY
NURTURE OUR LEARNERS TO **ACHIEVE**
AND **ASPIRE TO BE THE BEST THEY CAN BE.**

The school moto is at the heart of everything we do at Branas School -

“Community with learning, is a community with heart”
“Cymuned a’i chynefin, sy’n chymuned â chalon”

This vision drives everything we do and will be achieved through:

- A rich, deep and personalised education designed to meet the needs of each pupil;
- A pupil centred, skills focused curriculum that is relevant to the 21st century and inclusive of all;
- Encouraging all members of the school community to strive beyond expectations and develop a lifelong love of learning;
- Offering a broad range of learning experiences within a curriculum that values academic attainment as well as social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of education;
- Providing personalised careers education and guidance, with aspirational next steps planning, preparing pupils for their future;
- Recognising that time is precious; working quickly to turn around pupils’ attitudes towards education so they enjoy their time at school and make the most of the opportunities on offer;
- Working collaboratively with our professional partners to support the needs of each individual pupil.

Pupils will:

1. Be challenged to engage in learning and achieve meaningful qualifications that will enable them to take their next steps in education, employment or training;

2. Develop into healthy, resilient and confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society;
3. Create, nurture and maintain healthy positive relationships with others;
4. Experience success, whatever form it takes;
5. Become enterprising, creative contributors ready to play a full part in life and work;
6. Celebrate diversity and develop into ethical, informed young people who are ready to be citizens of the world.

OUR MISSION

Our mission statement is:

We provide a safe and inclusive learning environment that nurtures mutual respect and encourages reflection so that our pupils develop the knowledge skills and confidence to enable them to achieve their potential in all aspects of their lives.

OUR VALUES AND AIMS

Our values are:

- **Aspiration** : We encourage each other to be the best we can be
- **Curiosity**: We never stop learning and wondering about the world
- **Independence**: We think for ourselves and determine our own future
- **Innovation**: We look for new and creative solutions to problems
- **Reflection**: We learn from our experiences
- **Tolerance**: We value difference and respect other people's opinions
- **Trust**: We believe in the honesty and reliability of others



Our Aims:

- All pupils will undergo a 2 week induction period where we look to initial assess and diagnose learners within core subjects areas and look to support a transition timetable to reintegrate learners successfully back into education
- Within the first 6-weeks all pupils will undergo in depth assessments in order for us to fully understand them and their needs for effective learning;
- Everyone in Branas Isaf supports and challenges pupils to invest in education as a priority for a successful placement;
- All pupils are supported and challenged to achieve at least 95% attendance in school;
- All pupils are supported and challenged to engage in creative learning experiences appropriate to their needs, and supported by an accurate individual learning plan;
- All pupils are supported and challenged to achieve nationally recognised academic awards in core subjects;
- All pupils are supported and challenged to achieve accreditation in a wide range of subject areas ;
- All pupils are supported and challenged to become independent learners;
- All pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, and build positive relationships with those around them;
- All pupils are enabled to take part in decisions that shape their lives, the school and the community in which they live;
- All pupils are supported to demonstrate the behaviours needed to stretch themselves and cope with the challenges of learning;
- All pupils are enabled to attend and participate in regular therapy sessions;
- All pupils learn strategies to manage their feelings and know where to go for help when things are difficult;
- All pupils will have the opportunity to participate in work experience and work-related learning opportunities;
- All our pupils learn the skills to interpret data and apply mathematical concepts;
- All our pupils learn the skills to use digital technologies creatively and safely in preparation for the world in which they will live;
- All pupils are supported and challenged to lead healthy, active lifestyles and be prepared to make a positive contribution to society as adults.

2. The Complaints Policy

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK & GUIDANCE

- Part 7, Regulation 33; The Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014
- S29; The Education Act 2002
- Best Practice Advice for Schools Complaints Procedures

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CONCERN AND A COMPLAINT

A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. A complaint may be generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures. The School will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

There are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. In those cases, the school's formal procedure will be invoked through the stages outlined within this policy.

WHO CAN RAISE A CONCERN OR MAKE A COMPLAINT?

Any person, including pupils or members of the general public, may raise a concern or make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions). The School will not limit complaints to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

It is important in Branas School that pupils have a voice and are listened to as valued members of the school community. Central to this concept is the idea that all pupils will be supported to raise any concerns they may have about the school, will be listened to, and can be assured that the staff team will act on these concerns to achieve resolution. Pupils placed in the school have a variety of options when wanting to raise a concern and these include the following:

- Group meetings
- Tutor time
- 1:1 with a member of teaching staff at any time
- School Council
- Independent Advocate
- To a member of staff in the residential home, who can then bring the concern to the school
- To any other professional involved in the life of the child, and who can then advocate on their behalf.

The school will make every effort to resolve the concern in an informal and timely manner, and will always give the person raising the concern the opportunity to express how they would resolve the situation, or the outcomes they would require for resolution to be achieved.

Should such resolution not be achieved, or someone request to make a formal complaint, then the formal complaints process will be initiated and adhered to, to conclusion.

ALL young people coming into the School are informed of their right to make a complaint, shown the Complaints Policy, and given a Pupil Handbook which includes information about how to make a complaint. Their tutor will go through the booklet with them in detail to ensure that they are fully aware as to how to raise a concern or complaint in the School.

WHAT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A COMPLAINT FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS POLICY?

Within statutory procedures and guidance certain matters arising will not be considered under the School's Complaints Policy, and the School should refer to alternate policy sources to consider procedures to be applied. These are as follows:

- **Admissions to the school:** complaints should be raised with either Branäs Isaf or the Local Authority responsible for placing the child;
- **Statutory Assessments of SEND:** complaints should be raised with the Local Authority holding responsibility for the child;
- **Safeguarding & Child Protection:** The School should refer to the Safeguarding Policy & Procedures;
- **Whistleblowing:** The School should refer to the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures;
- **Exclusion of a child from school:** The School should refer to the Exclusion Policy;
- **Staff grievances and disciplinary:** The School should refer to the Disciplinary and Grievance Policy and Procedures;
- **Complaints about external service providers:** Complaints should be directed to that service provider and dealt with under the providers own Complaints Policy.

DUTIES OF THE SCHOOL

In order to ensure transparency and to meet the requirements of Paragraph 7 of the Independent School Standards (Wales) 2003, the school will ensure that the Complaints Policy and Procedure:

- Is easily accessible and publicised;
- Available on request;
- Is simple to understand and use;
- Is impartial;
- Is non-adversarial;
- Enables a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- Respects people's desire for confidentiality;
- Addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- Provides information to the School's senior management team so that services can be improved

RECORDING & REPORTING

Branäs School will comply with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that all consideration is given to the preferred method of communication by the complainant due to any disability or learning difficulty they may have, and the School will allow alternative methods of contact in order to support a complaint being made and heard.

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing (including email, text or other social media communication available to the school). Other than receiving a complaint in writing, for other media, brief notes should be made, clarified with the complainant and agreed as correct. It may be appropriate to send a formal written response to clarify the points raised, and this should be added to the complaint record.

Where there are communication difficulties, the School will use a recording device to ensure accuracy of recording, which can be reviewed by the complainant as required.

All pupils in the school can record their complaints on the Pupil Complaints Form, available to all pupils. If the pupil has difficulties with literacy skills, a member of staff (not included in the scope of the complaint) can use this as a basis from which to help the young person write a more accurate complaint; and may use other methods of communication and recording as appropriate to the needs of the pupil.

All concerns and complaints received by the School will be recorded in the School's Complaints Log using Behaviourwatch. This will log particular details of the concern or complaint. If the issue arising needs to be investigated as a formal complaint then a formal complaints record will be started (referenced to the Complaints Log). This record will be completed at all stages of the complaint until conclusion and final outcomes, and will contain all information and evidence pertinent to the complaints process.

The Executive Head Teacher is responsible for the regular review and maintenance of the Complaints Log and Complaints records, ensuring the process in place for a complaint is followed in a timely manner, and ensuring the investigation process is fair, robust and thorough.

In the event of a complaint being raised against the Executive Head Teacher at the School, this should be raised with:

Declan Tuer –Regional Education Lead

Declan.Tuer@caretech-uk.com

07827302334

TIMELINESS

The School is duty bound to consider and resolve complaints in a timely manner, without allowing excessive time to pass before a conclusion is reached, yet not processing a complaint so quickly that the speed of investigation impacts on the quality of process, and, by extension, the fairness of any conclusion and outcomes reached.

For this reason, the School gives clear guidance as to expected timescales for each stage of the process in the next section. The School accepts that, at times, extenuating circumstances may prevent these timescales from being adhered to, but that the reasons for any delay should be formally recorded in the complaints record.

The School will communicate timescales, and any changes to these, clearly to the complainant at each stage of the process.

The School expects complaints to be made as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the complaint. In general, the School will not investigate a complaint if it is raised more than three months after the event occurring. The School will consider each individual complaint on the circumstances arising and may make allowances for going beyond these timelines if extenuating reasons exist.

WHO LEADS A COMPLAINT?

It is important to note that due to staffing structures, and in order to ensure that all complaints are handled in a fair and unbiased manner, it may not be appropriate for a teacher to investigate or reach a decision about complaints raised in the school. The Executive Head Teacher may refer a complaint to another Head Teacher within the group,

and referred to below as the 'Supporting Head Teacher'. In the instance of a Stage 2 – Formal Consideration arising, the matter MUST go to the 'Supporting Head Teacher' in the first instance who may refer back to the Branas School Executive Head Teacher should that be decided. The Director of Education Services may, at times, be considered the most appropriate 'Supporting Head Teacher' to deal with a complaint arising.

FOR A CONCERN OR FOR RESOLUTION AT STAGE 1 – LOCAL / INFORMAL RESOLUTION:

The process should be led by the Executive Head Teacher, on receiving the concern or complaint. If this member of staff dealing with the concern or complaint feels that they lack the authority to achieve resolution, or feel that the upon initial investigation, the matter is more complex than first thought, then they must pass responsibility to a Supporting Head Teacher or Head of Education Services.

FOR RESOLUTION AT STAGE 2 – FORMAL CONSIDERATION:

The process must be led by a Supporting Head Teacher, or delegated by the Supporting Head Teacher to the Branas School Head Teacher. The Supporting Head Teacher may decide that it is more appropriate to request someone external to the school to carry out any investigation into the complaint. This remains the decision of the Supporting Head Teacher in coordinating the process. At Stage 2 it may be appropriate for the investigating officer to convene a Formal Hearing in order to explore the circumstances surrounding the complaint.

STAGES OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Stage 1 – Local/Informal Resolution

Timescale: 14/28 Days

1. The Executive Head Teacher receiving the complaint or the Supporting Head Teacher will resolve the matter as soon as reasonably practical and in any event within 14 days. This may be extended for a further 14 days with the agreement of the complainant. The Executive Head Teacher must reach a decision as to whether it needs to be passed on to the Supporting Head Teacher within 48 hours of receiving the complaint.
2. If it is possible to resolve a complaint at Stage 1 of the process then the following processes must take place:
 - a. Record a summary of the complaint and the manner in which it was resolved in the Complaints Log and in the Daily Record of any relevant child/young person;
 - b. The Executive Head Teacher must confirm in writing to the complainant the agreed resolution. The person(s) about whom the complaint was made will receive the same information in writing, along with any actions requiring attention.

Stage 2 – Formal Consideration

Timescale: 35 Days (From the initial complaint)

1. Should the complaint not be able to achieve resolution at Stage 1 then the Executive Head Teacher must take steps to take the complaint to the Stage 2 formal process, and if not previously done, refer it to the Supporting Head Teacher. This is either because the complaint could not be effectively resolved at the Stage 1, or the timescale could not be met, or the matter was too serious to attempt resolution at Stage 1. Agreement from the complainant is desirable to take the complaint to Stage 2, but not essential. Each case will be decided on the strength of the evidence provided.
2. Before undertaking the Formal Consideration, the Supporting Head Teacher will clarify the substance of the complaint with the complainant, put it into writing and give a copy to the complainant.
3. If the complaint relates to another pupil in the school then that pupil's social worker, and/or parents / corporate parents will be consulted.
4. The Supporting Head Teacher, or delegated lead, will seek to resolve the complaint as quickly as possible, but within the maximum 35 days of the request for the Formal Consideration. This may be extended with the agreement of the complainant. Should an extension be required, the extenuating circumstances leading to it must be communicated to the complainant in writing.
5. Should the Supporting Head Teacher decide that any investigation required to address the complaint would be best carried out by an external investigator then the Executive Head Teacher must:
 - a. Appoint an appropriate external investigator without delay;
 - b. Communicate the decision to use an external investigator to the complainant;
 - c. Continue to maintain oversight and progress of the investigation within the timescales of the process.
6. Following completion of any investigation the Supporting Head Teacher will reach his/her conclusions, and decide on outcomes, based on the strength of evidence provided by the investigation.
7. The Supporting Head Teacher will notify the complainant of the outcomes of the complaint, preferably verbally, and always followed up in writing. If the complaint was justified, the complainant should be told what, if any, remedial action will be taken and an apology offered. Outcomes of an investigation into a complaint may lead to a decision to begin processes falling within other policies and procedures, but this will not prevent the complaint itself from reaching a timely conclusion.
8. The person(s) about whom the complaint was made will receive the same information in writing, along with any actions requiring attention.
9. Details of the outcomes must be recorded on the complaint record, along with all other recording of the investigation process. Once completed, this record must be signed-off by the Supporting Head Teacher and filed in Branas School Behaviourwatch. Outcomes from the complaint will also be recorded in the Complaints Log on Behaviourwatch. If the complaint concerned a pupil in the school, a copy of the complaint record will be:
 - a. Sent to the residential home for inclusion in the young person's file;
 - b. Sent to the young person's social worker for inclusion in their records;
 - c. Sent to the Registered Manager of the residential home for inclusion in their complaints file.
 - d. Notification sent to the proprietor representative responsible for compliance.

Stage 3 – Review Panel

Timescale: 28 Days

1. If dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 2 Formal Investigation, a complainant may request a Stage 3: Review Panel to consider their complaint; they may also ask that their complaint be passed to the Placing Authority or Regulatory Authority. To initiate a Stage 3: Review Panel, the complainant should notify the Head Teacher, either verbally or in writing; the notification will be confirmed in writing explaining the process and timescales for convening a Stage 3 Review Panel.
2. The Executive Head Teacher will ensure that:
 - a. Senior managers and, if the complaint involves a pupil at the school, the placing authority, and/or parents / corporate parents, are notified and briefed as necessary until the matter is resolved;
 - b. The complainant is clear about the process and timescales;
 - c. Where the complainant is a young person, they have access to an independent advocate or representative at the panel hearing. Young people may also be accompanied by their parents or a representative of the corporate parent. Where a parent, that they are made aware of their right to be accompanied at the panel hearing;
 - d. Necessary arrangements are made for the Review Panel to be conducted in a fair and thorough manner. The Review Panel has the power to make findings and recommendations on the complaint as suggested by the evidence presented to the panel;
 - e. A Review Panel is established to consider the matter. For complaints arising in the School, the review panel process will, generally, involve the Head of Education Services and 2 other members of the Senior Management Team, independent of the matter under consideration. The Head of Education Services will chair the panel and report back to the Head Teacher on any recommendations made by the Review Panel.
 - f. The Review Panel communicate their recommendations to the complainant in writing, and within the timescales for the Stage 3 process;
 - g. The person(s) about whom the complaint was made will receive the same information in writing, along with any actions requiring attention.
 - h. The recommendations of the Review Panel are included in the complaints record and filed in the school's Complaints File;
 - i. The process described at Stage 2 (9) (a-d) must also be completed.

COMPLAINTS MADE AGAINST THE EXECUTIVE HEAD TEACHER

Please note that in the event of a complaint being made against the Executive Head Teacher for Branas School the exact same process as detailed above will be followed, but responsibility for the process will be passed straight to the Head of Education Services for Caretech/Cambian Group.

In the event that a Stage 3 Review Panel is required, this will comprise 3 members of the Senior Management Team for Caretech/Cambian Group Children's Services, exclusive of the Head of Education Services, and independent of the complaint under review. A chairperson will be appointed to fulfil the role as detailed in Stage 3 (2) (e) above.

Recording and reporting for the complaint will NOT be kept in the school, other than the initial entry into the Complaints Log. It will be kept as part of the Head of Education Services own Complaints File, external to the school, and on that Executive Head Teacher's personnel file.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Education (Independent Schools Standards) requires that:

“correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.”

The School's Complaints File, containing a complete record and evidence of each individual complaint will be held by the Executive Head Teacher, in the Executive Head Teacher's office. This file is confidential and will only be made available to those people stipulated in the Standards, and on request. Findings and recommendations are available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and Executive Head Teacher. Records will indicate whether complaints were resolved following a formal procedure or panel hearing. Action taken by the school as a result of the complaints will be evaluated by the proprietor to ensure improvement in practice.

Complaints records involving the Executive Head Teacher will be held in a likewise manner by the Head of Education Services.

The Complaints Log, held on Behaviourwatch, contains only the information required to log the complaint and its nature. It will not contain any of the confidential detail of the complaints process being undertaken for that complaint.

REVIEW

This policy and procedures will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure continued compliance with The Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014, the Independent School Standards (Wales) 2003 and relevant guidance issued by the DFE and Welsh Government.

This document will be next reviewed in September 2024

3. APPENDIX

This Complaints Policy should be read with reference to the following documents to give a clearer picture of the expectations of working practice in the teaching staff team in Branas School

I) SCHOOL POLICIES

- Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Incidents and Physical Intervention Policy
- School Timetable
- Statement of Independence
- Referral & Admissions Policy
- Quality Framework

School Procedure for receiving and investigating complaints by Young People

