TAKE 1
Complaints Policy and Procedure

Independent School Standards compliant • 2026/27

Policy owner	Proprietor / Headteachers
Approved by	Proprietor / Governing Body
Effective from	1 September 2026
Review date	August 2027, or sooner following legal/regulatory change
Statutory basis	Part 7, Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
Applies to	Complaints from parents/carers of pupils currently registered at Take 1; wider concerns may also be considered under this procedure where appropriate
Availability	Published on the school website and available to parents/carers on request

1. Policy statement

Take 1 welcomes concerns and complaints as an opportunity to resolve difficulties, learn from experience and improve the quality of education, safeguarding and support provided to pupils. Complaints will be handled fairly, consistently, sensitively and without unnecessary delay.

This procedure is intended to meet Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. It provides the required three stages: informal resolution, a formal written complaint and, where the parent remains dissatisfied, a hearing before a complaints panel.

2. Aims

- Make it straightforward for parents/carers to raise concerns;
- Resolve concerns at the earliest appropriate stage wherever possible;
- Ensure a full, fair and impartial consideration of formal complaints;
- Set clear and reasonable timescales;
- Ensure nobody involved in deciding a complaint has a conflict of interest or has been directly involved in the matters being considered at the relevant review stage;
- Provide appropriate findings, recommendations and remedies where necessary;
- Maintain accurate and confidential complaint records; and
- Use complaint themes to support school improvement and effective governance.

3. Scope

For the purposes of the Independent School Standards, this procedure applies to complaints from parents, including a person with parental responsibility or care of a child, about a pupil who is currently registered at Take 1. Take 1 may choose to consider other concerns under the same process where appropriate.

The statutory procedure does not have to cover complaints about a prospective pupil who has not been admitted, or a complaint first raised after a pupil has left the school. However, where a complaints process began while the pupil was still being educated at Take 1, the school will complete that process.

Where another statutory or specialist procedure applies, Take 1 may direct the matter to that procedure. Examples include:

- Child protection or safeguarding concerns, which must be dealt with immediately under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Allegations about a member of staff that meet safeguarding thresholds;
- Staff grievances, disciplinary matters or whistleblowing;
- Requests for information or data-subject rights; and
- Complaints about services or decisions for which another organisation has statutory responsibility.

Where a complaint contains both school-complaint and safeguarding elements, the safeguarding response takes priority where necessary, but the school will still address any remaining complaint issues that fall within this procedure.

4. Accessibility, equality and support

Take 1 will make reasonable adjustments to enable a parent/carer to use this procedure, including adjustments connected with disability, communication needs or language. A parent may ask another person to help them communicate with the school.
A complainant will not be treated adversely because they have made a complaint in good faith. The school also expects communications and conduct during the complaints process to remain respectful and safe.

5. General principles and timescales

The timescales below refer to school working days and exclude weekends, bank holidays and school closure periods. Where a complaint is received during a school holiday, the timescale will normally begin on the first school working day after the holiday.

Take 1 will aim to meet the published timescales. If this is not possible because a matter is particularly complex, relevant people are unavailable or an external investigation affects the process, the complainant will be told the reason for the delay and given a revised timescale.

Complaints should normally be raised promptly so that events can be investigated effectively. The school may apply a reasonable time limit to historic complaints, but will consider safeguarding issues, exceptional circumstances and whether a fair investigation remains possible before deciding not to consider a matter.

6. Summary of the three-stage procedure

Stage	Process	Lead	Target timescale
1	Informal concern/complaint	Appropriate member of staff or school leader	Acknowledge/initial response within 3 working days; aim to resolve promptly
2	Formal written complaint	Executive Director or an alternative uninvolved senior/proprietor-appointed person	Acknowledge within 3 working days; written outcome normally within 15 working days
3	Complaints panel hearing	Panel appointed by/on behalf of the proprietor: at least 3 uninvolved people, including 1 independent member	Arrange without unreasonable delay; normally within 20 working days of a valid panel request, with written findings normally within 5 working days after the hearing

7. Stage 1 - Informal resolution

Parents/carers are encouraged to raise a concern with the member of staff best placed to resolve it. A concern may be raised in person, by telephone, by email or in writing. The school will acknowledge or provide an initial response within 3 working days.

The member of staff should listen to the concern, clarify the outcome being sought, make proportionate enquiries and seek a practical resolution. A brief record should be made where the matter is significant or requires follow-up.

If the concern is about the person who would ordinarily deal with it, or the complainant would reasonably be uncomfortable approaching that person, it should be referred to an appropriate senior leader. If the parent remains dissatisfied, they may proceed to Stage 2.

8. Stage 2 - Formal written complaint

A formal complaint must be made in writing. It should be addressed to the Executive Director through the school office and should set out, as clearly as possible, what happened, why the parent remains dissatisfied and what outcome they are seeking. Where the complaint concerns the Executive Director, or there is another conflict of interest, the proprietor will appoint an appropriate person who has not been directly involved in the matters complained about to manage Stage 2.

The school will normally acknowledge the formal complaint within 3 working days. The person considering the complaint will determine the appropriate investigation, which may include reviewing records and speaking separately with relevant people.

The complainant will normally receive a written outcome within 15 working days. The response will explain the conclusions reached, any action the school proposes to take so far as it is appropriate to disclose it, and how to request Stage 3 if the parent remains dissatisfied.

9. Stage 3 - Complaints panel hearing

If the parent remains dissatisfied following Stage 2, they may request a panel hearing. The request should be made in writing, normally within 10 working days of the Stage 2 response, explaining why they remain dissatisfied.

The hearing will be before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one member must be independent of the management and running of Take 1. The independent member must not be a member of staff, proprietor/director/governor, or otherwise involved in the management and running of the school.

Take 1 will make reasonable arrangements to facilitate the parent's right to attend. The parent may attend and be accompanied if they wish. The right to be accompanied does not automatically create a right for a legal representative to make representations on the parent's behalf, although the panel may permit this where appropriate.

The panel hearing must still take place in accordance with this procedure if the parent chooses not to attend, provided reasonable arrangements have been offered.

10. Arrangements for the panel hearing

- The clerk/organiser will confirm the date, time, format and panel membership;
- Panel members will declare any actual or potential conflict of interest;
- Relevant papers will be circulated to the complainant, school and panel sufficiently in advance, subject to safeguarding, confidentiality and data-protection considerations;
- The hearing will be conducted fairly and is not intended to be adversarial;
- The complainant will have a reasonable opportunity to explain the complaint and the school will have a reasonable opportunity to respond;
- The panel may ask questions and request further information where necessary;
- The panel will consider the evidence independently and reach findings on the issues before it; and the panel may make recommendations to the school/proprietor arising from its findings.

11. Panel findings and recommendations

The panel will make findings and, where appropriate, recommendations. A copy of the findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.

The findings and recommendations will also be made available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and Headteacher.

The written outcome will normally be issued within 5 working days of the hearing. The panel's decision concludes Take 1's internal complaints procedure.

12. Complaints about the Headteacher, proprietor, director or governor

Where a complaint concerns a person who would ordinarily have responsibility for a stage of this procedure, that person will not determine the complaint at that stage. The proprietor will arrange an appropriately independent alternative.

Where a complaint concerns the proprietor/proprietorial body itself, Take 1 will arrange the process so that those determining the complaint have not been directly involved in the matters complained about and the Stage 3 panel still meets the requirements of Part 7, including the independent-member requirement.

13. Safeguarding concerns raised through a complaint

If information provided during a complaint suggests that a child may be at risk of harm, the matter must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and dealt with under Take 1's safeguarding procedures. The school will not delay necessary safeguarding action while a complaint is being investigated.

The complaints process may need to be paused or adapted where police, children's social care, the Local Authority Designated Officer or another statutory agency is involved. The complainant will be informed where possible, although safeguarding and legal restrictions may limit the information that can be shared.

14. Data protection complaints

From 19 June 2026, section 164A of the Data Protection Act 2018 places specific duties on data controllers when handling certain complaints from data subjects. Where a complaint under this policy is also a data-protection complaint, Take 1 will ensure that the applicable data-protection requirements are met, including facilitating the making of the complaint, acknowledging it within the statutory period, taking appropriate steps to investigate it without undue delay and communicating the outcome promptly.

The school may use this complaints procedure for such complaints, provided doing so does not conflict with its data-protection obligations. Information about escalation to the Information Commissioner's Office will be provided where appropriate.

15. Recording complaints

Take 1 will keep a written record of all complaints made under the formal procedure at Stage 2 and beyond. The record will show:

- The nature of the complaint.
- Whether it was resolved following the formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing.
- The outcome/findings and action taken by the school as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld.
- The date the complaint was concluded.

The school will also maintain the information necessary to state the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, as required by the Independent School Standards.

16. Confidentiality and record keeping

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access, or where disclosure is otherwise required or permitted by law.

Complaint information will be shared internally only with those who need it to consider the complaint, safeguard pupils, implement action or provide appropriate oversight. Records will be retained securely in accordance with Take 1's data-retention arrangements.

17. Learning from complaints and governance oversight

Senior leaders and the proprietor/governing body will review complaint themes, outcomes and actions at appropriate intervals. Reporting for oversight purposes should normally be anonymised. Leaders will consider whether complaints identify wider issues relating to safeguarding, behaviour, SEND, equality, curriculum, staffing, communication, policy implementation or compliance with the Independent School Standards.

The proprietor is responsible for ensuring that this procedure is not only written and available but effectively implemented in practice.

18. Persistent, unreasonable or abusive contact

Take 1 will not refuse to consider a complaint merely because a complainant is persistent or because the complaint is challenging. However, once a complaint has completed the procedure, or where the frequency or nature of contact becomes abusive, threatening, harassing or significantly interferes with the school's ability to operate, the school may set proportionate communication arrangements.

Any restriction will be tailored to the behaviour rather than the substance of a genuine complaint, will not prevent new safeguarding concerns from being raised and will be reviewed where appropriate.

19. External escalation after Take 1's procedure

For independent schools, the Department for Education is the regulator responsible for considering whether a school is meeting the Independent School Standards. A parent who has completed Take 1's complaints procedure and believes the school is failing to meet the standards may use the GOV.UK 'Complain about a school: Private schools' route to raise the matter with the Department for Education.

Ofsted does not investigate individual complaints about independent schools. However, the Department for Education may ask Ofsted to carry out an inspection or consider wider issues raised by complaints as part of inspection activity.

20. Publication and availability

This complaints procedure will be published on Take 1's website and made available to parents/carers on request. Take 1 will also make available the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, in accordance with Part 6 of the Independent School Standards.

21. Linked policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality Policy
- Data Protection / Privacy Policy
- Admissions and Placement Policy
  CCTV Policy

Appendix 1 - Complaints compliance checklist

- Written procedure available to parents.
- Clear timescales at every stage.
- Stage 1 permits informal consideration.
- Stage 2 is a formal written complaint.
- Stage 3 is a panel of at least three people not directly involved in the complaint.
- At least one Stage 3 panel member is independent of the management and running of Take 1.
- Parent may attend and be accompanied.
- Panel makes findings and recommendations.
- Findings/recommendations go to the complainant and relevant person complained about.
- Findings/recommendations are available for inspection by the proprietor and Headteacher.
- Written record kept of all formal complaints, whether resolved formally or proceeding to panel.
- Record includes action taken regardless of whether complaint is upheld.
- Individual complaint correspondence/statements/records are kept confidential subject to statutory exceptions.
- Number of formal complaints in the preceding school year is made available as required.
- Data-protection complaints are handled consistently with section 164A Data Protection Act 2018.

Appendix 2 - Key amendments from the August 2025 policy

- Retained the core compliant informal, formal and independent-panel structure but simplified it into the three stages expressly required by Part 7.
- Clarified that a Stage 3 panel must contain at least three people, not simply a 'panel of Directors'.
- Strengthened the definition of an independent panel member in line with the April 2026 DfE Independent School Standards guidance.
- Added a clear process where the complaint concerns the person who would normally hear it.
- Added explicit written-record requirements, including whether a formal complaint proceeds to panel and action taken regardless of whether it is upheld.
- Added the Part 6 requirement to make available the number of formal complaints registered in the preceding school year.
- Corrected external escalation: complaints about independent-school standards are raised with the Department for Education; Ofsted does not investigate individual school complaints.
- Added safeguarding escalation and clarified that safeguarding action takes priority.
- Added the new data-protection complaint requirements applying from 19 June 2026.
- Added reasonable adjustments, conflict-of-interest safeguards, panel administration, persistent-contact provisions and governance monitoring.
- Updated review dates for the 2026/27 academic year.