

Elysian

Complaints Policy



Reviewed: April 2026

Date of next review: April 2027

This policy is applicable to all Elysian sites.

Rationale:

The Elysian complaints policy is in place to ensure that parents/carers and others can express their concerns in an open and honest way in accordance with a published procedure.

The complaints procedure is designed to:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- be easily accessible and well-publicised
- be simple to understand and use
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial.
- allow swift handling, with established time limits for action, and keep people informed of progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- respect people's desire for confidentiality
- address all points raised, and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- provide information to Elysian's Leadership team so that services can be improved

Each complaint will be recorded fully in writing and a record of all complaints, and their outcome is to be kept in a folder accessible by the Leadership, including the Head of Education and the Proprietors.

Investigating complaints

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will make sure that they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure of further information is necessary)
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of the interview

Procedure:

Stage 1 Informal Complaint

(Concern raised with a member of staff responsible for the area of concern)

- Any problem or concern should be raised within **10 working days** with the member of staff responsible for the area or action you are concerned about.
- The incident will be acknowledged within **7 working days** of receipt.

- The incident will be investigated and responded to within **21 working days** of receipt of the complaint.

All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem promptly at this informal stage.

Most concerns and potential complaints can best be resolved through informal discussion with the relevant member of staff or Head of Education.

If your concern is more serious you may prefer to make an appointment to discuss it with the Head of Education.

If the first approach is made to a member of the Advisory Board, they would need to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the complaint's procedures.

Stage 2 Formal Complaint

- If you are not satisfied with the response received in stage 1 then you should escalate to a formal complaint within **5 working days** of receiving the response detailed in Stage 1. Additional consideration will be given to complaints arriving outside of this time frame due to exceptional circumstances.
- The formal complaint will be acknowledged within **7 working days** of receipt.
- The formal complaint will be investigated by the Head of Education and responded to within **21 working days** of receipt. You will be kept informed if, for example, more time is needed to complete the investigation.

If your original concern was about an action by the Head of Education personally, and you have already discussed it at the informal stage, then you should put your complaint in writing to the Chair of the Advisory Board.

Stage 3 Management Advisory Board Investigation

- If you are not satisfied with the Head of Education's response, you need to write to the Advisory Board Chair, giving details of the complaint within **10 working days** of the response receipt at stage 2. The Chair's name and contact details are available from the Elysian office.
- The Chair will convene an Advisory Board Complaints Panel within **20 working days** of receiving your request to investigate your complaint. At least one panel member will be independent from the running and management of Elysian. You may be invited to speak to the panel at a meeting and be accompanied by a friend or representative.

After the meeting you will be advised of the outcome in writing, this will normally be within **10 school days** of the meeting. The decision of the Complaints Panel is the final stage of Elysian's complaints procedure.

The Advisory Board appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process. For most complaints the decision of the Advisory Board is the last step in the procedure. Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole Advisory Board at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

Complaints against Elysian staff

If your complaint amounts to or includes an allegation against a member of staff, this may need to be considered under Elysian's grievance procedure for employees, rather than the complaint procedure. You will be advised if these procedures are to be used in dealing with your complaint.

A complaint about the Local Authority

Procedures for complaining about the Local Authority are set out in a separate Leaflet about the Council's complaints procedure. A copy of this Leaflet is available from Elysian, libraries and Council offices.

Serial and persistent complainants

In accordance with advice from the Department for Education, Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures/best-practice-advice-for-school-complaints-procedures-2019>

Elysian recognises the potential detrimental impact on staff wellbeing, and on its time and resources caused by serial and persistent complainants.

Where all stages of the Complaints Procedure have been followed and a complainant remains dissatisfied such that they attempt to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Board of Governors will inform them that the procedure has been completed and the matter closed.

Further communication from the complainant regarding the same issue may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the Elysian may choose not to respond. This should not happen prior to all three stages of the Complaints Procedure being completed.

A 'serial' or 'persistent' marking will only be applied against the subject or complaint itself rather than against the individual complainant.

The decision to stop responding will be taken where:

- the Elysian has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs.
- the complainant has been given a clear statement of the Elysian's position and their options (if any); and
- the complainant is contacting the Elysian repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time.

Additionally, the following factors are relevant in supporting further a decision to stop responding:

- if the Elysian has reason to believe the individual is contacting the Elysian with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience.
- if the complainant's letters, electronic mailings or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive.
- if the complainant makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, any member of the Elysian community, including children and young people, young people's parents or carers, members of the staff or the Board of Governors.

Ultimately, if a complainant persists to the point that the Elysian considers it to constitute harassment, legal advice will be sought as to the next steps.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled in a confidential manner. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where:

disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) or another authorised inspectorate;

- disclosure is required by the Secretary of State;
- disclosure is required under other legal authority;
- disclosure is necessary to fulfil safeguarding obligations or to protect the welfare of a child or vulnerable person;

- disclosure is required for the purposes of regulatory, disciplinary, legal or criminal investigations or proceedings.

A written record will be kept of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing, and of any action taken by the school as a result of those complaints. Records will be retained securely in accordance with the school's retention schedule and data protection obligations and will be available for inspection by the proprietor, the Headteacher, the Secretary of State and inspectors acting on behalf of the Secretary of State and those conducting inspections on behalf of the Secretary of State, as required by law.

Complaints Information

The school maintains a written record of all formal complaints and any action taken as a result. Information regarding the number of formal complaints registered under the formal complaints procedure during the preceding school year is available from the school on request.

Conclusion

By having a clear, published procedure, Elysian hopes that this will help resolve problems and confirm good working relationships between all people involved with Elysian.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Proprietors

For the purposes of this policy, where the term Elysian is used, it refers to Elysian Animal Assisted Interventions including Elysian Education and therapeutic provision.