SENSES Learning Hub

Complaints Procedure Policy

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The vast majority of complaints and concerns can be resolved informally.

Parents must feel able to raise concerns and complaints with members of staff at SENSES Learning Hub without formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing.

At first it may be unclear whether a parent is asking a question or expressing an opinion rather than making an education complaint. A parent may want a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether they wish to take it further.

A concern or unresolved problem becomes a complaint only when the parent or carer asserts that SENSES Learning Hub has acted wrongly in some significant decision, action or failure to take action.

Even when a complaint has been made, it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

SENSES Learning Hub will ensure that its complaints procedure is accessible, proportionate, clearly communicated and appropriate to its role as a non school alternative provision provider. The procedure will be made available to parents and carers and will explain how concerns can be raised, investigated and escalated.

This procedure is informed by the Department for Education's Non school alternative provision: voluntary national standards. These standards are currently non statutory but are intended to inform local oversight and commissioning of non school alternative provision.

Special Circumstances

Any complaint or other notice that suggests that a student has been at risk of significant harm through violence, emotional abuse, sexual interference or neglect may be referred without further notice to the relevant local authority children's social care service and/or the Social Services for the area in which the child lives.

Where a complaint raises a safeguarding concern, the matter will be dealt with under the SENSES Learning Hub Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy rather than being treated solely as a complaint. Safeguarding concerns will be referred to the appropriate safeguarding authority or emergency service where necessary.

Where information is relevant to safeguarding or promoting the welfare of a child, SENSES Learning Hub will share information appropriately and lawfully with relevant safeguarding partners and commissioning organisations. Staff will not delay necessary safeguarding action because a complaint is also being investigated. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 introduced new information sharing duties which apply from September 2026 in specified circumstances.

If a Social Services authority decides to investigate a situation this may postpone or supersede investigation by the Directors of SENSES Learning Hub.

Other Solutions to Complaints

Where a matter can be resolved through a legal appeal or another statutory process it will not necessarily be considered as a formal complaint.

The key areas may include admissions decisions, decisions relating to formal assessment of special educational needs, decisions relating to an EHCP and decisions relating to permanent exclusion where another statutory process applies.

SENSES Learning Hub is not the decision making body for a student's EHCP, school admission, statutory exclusion or local authority placement decision where these decisions belong to a school or local authority. Complaints about such decisions should normally be directed to the organisation with legal responsibility for the decision.

Where a complaint concerns an examination, awarding body decision or assessment process, the relevant awarding body's complaints, enquiries about results or appeals procedure will apply where appropriate.

Dealing with concerns informally

The parent should be given an opportunity for discussion of their concern with the appropriate member of staff. An appointment may need to be made.

The parent should be able to bring a friend to any discussion.

The member of staff dealing with the concern should make sure that the parent is clear when action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed.

Staff should record the nature of the concern and any agreed actions where the concern is significant, recurring or requires follow up.

Concerns should be dealt with promptly and sensitively and the student’s welfare and best interests should remain central to the response.

Stage 1 – Formal Complaint to the Directors

Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, the parent or carer may make a formal complaint in writing to the Directors. A complaint may be submitted by letter, email or by completing the SENSES Learning Hub Complaint Form.

The Directors should acknowledge the complaint in writing.

In some cases, the Directors will have already been involved in looking at the matter. Where this is the case, the Directors will consider whether another appropriate person should investigate the complaint in order to ensure that the investigation is as impartial as reasonably possible.

The Directors will consider providing an opportunity to meet with the complainant to supplement any information previously provided.

If the complaint is against a member of staff the Directors will talk to the staff member against whom the complaint has been made.

If necessary, the Directors will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved.

The Directors will keep reasonable written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.

Records relating to complaints will be stored securely and handled in accordance with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. Information will only be shared where there is an appropriate lawful basis or where safeguarding or another legal duty requires information to be shared.

Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Directors will produce a written response to the complainant.

The Directors may wish to meet the complainant to discuss or resolve the matter before confirming the outcome in writing.

The written response should include a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it.

Where appropriate, it should include what action SENSES Learning Hub will take to resolve the complaint.

Stage 1 should normally be completed within ten working days. Where this is not possible because a complaint is complex or requires further investigation, the complainant will be informed of the revised timescale and the reason for the delay.

The response will explain what further action the complainant may take if they remain dissatisfied.

Stage 2 – Review of the Complaint

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Stage 1 response, they may request a review of the complaint in writing. The request should normally be made within ten working days of the Stage 1 response and should explain the reasons why the complainant remains dissatisfied.

Where both Directors were directly involved in the original complaint, SENSES Learning Hub will consider whether an independent person, external adviser or appropriate commissioning organisation should be asked to review the complaint, where this is reasonably available and appropriate.

The Stage 2 review will consider whether the original complaint was investigated fairly, whether relevant evidence was considered, whether the response was reasonable and whether any further action is appropriate.

The person undertaking the review may request further information from the complainant, staff members or other relevant parties where necessary.

The outcome of Stage 2 will be provided in writing and will normally be issued within 15 working days. Where a longer period is required, the complainant will be informed of the revised timescale and the reasons for it.

The Stage 2 outcome will be the final stage of SENSES Learning Hub's internal complaints procedure unless another statutory, commissioning or contractual complaints route applies.

Complaints against the Directors

Where a complaint is wholly or mainly about one or both Directors, the Directors will not undertake the investigation where this would create a conflict of interest or undermine the independence of the process.

Where appropriate, SENSES Learning Hub will ask the relevant commissioning school, local authority or another suitably independent person to consider the complaint or provide an independent review.

Where the complaint concerns safeguarding, the matter will be referred to the appropriate safeguarding authority in accordance with the SENSES Learning Hub Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Complaints involving staff

If a complaint is made against a member of staff, the Directors will inform the staff member of the nature of the complaint and provide an appropriate opportunity to respond.

Where a complaint may amount to a safeguarding allegation against a staff member, it will be dealt with under the safeguarding procedures for allegations against adults working with children. The Directors will seek advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer where appropriate.

A complaint will not be allowed to interfere with any safeguarding investigation or statutory investigation being undertaken by an external agency.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Complaints will be handled confidentially wherever possible. Information will be shared only with those who need it to investigate the complaint, protect the child or fulfil a legal, safeguarding, contractual or commissioning responsibility.

Where information held by SENSES Learning Hub may be relevant to safeguarding or promoting the welfare of a child, staff will follow the SENSES Learning Hub Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and current statutory information sharing guidance.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 introduced a new information sharing duty for specified relevant persons and certain organisations providing safeguarding services on their behalf. This duty applies from September 2026. SENSES Learning Hub will cooperate with relevant safeguarding partners and commissioning organisations where information sharing is lawfully required.

Unreasonable or Persistent Complaints

SENSES Learning Hub will seek to deal fairly with all complaints. However, where a complainant repeatedly raises the same issue after it has been fully investigated and responded to, or where communication becomes abusive, threatening or unreasonable, the Directors may make reasonable arrangements for future communication.

Any decision to restrict communication will be proportionate, recorded and communicated in writing. Such arrangements will not prevent a complainant from raising a genuine safeguarding concern or other matter requiring statutory consideration.

Complaint Records and Monitoring

The Directors will maintain a confidential record of formal complaints, including the date received, nature of the complaint, action taken, outcome and any improvements identified.

Complaint records will be reviewed periodically to identify recurring issues, training needs, changes to practice or opportunities to improve the quality and safety of the provision.

Where a complaint identifies a weakness in policy or practice, SENSES Learning Hub will consider whether changes are required and whether these should be communicated to staff, students, parents, carers, commissioning schools or other relevant parties.

Complaints will be considered as part of ongoing quality assurance and review of the provision, consistent with the DfE's voluntary national standards for non school alternative provision.

Complaint Form (for Stage 1 complaints)

If you have tried unsuccessfully to resolve your complaint with SENSES Learning Hub and wish to take the matter further, please complete this form and send it to the Directors.

If your complaint is against one or both Directors, please send the complaint to the relevant commissioning school or local authority where appropriate, or contact SENSES Learning Hub to request information about an appropriate independent route.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Tel. no: (Home) _____

Tel. no: (Day) _____

Name of Child: _____

Date of birth of child: _____

What is your complaint about and what would you like the Directors to do?

_____

_____

_____

_____

(continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

When did you discuss your concern/complaint with the appropriate member of staff?

_____

_____

What was the result of the discussion?

_____

_____

_____

(continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Review Log

Review date	Completed by who
20.08.25	John Fox and Dawn Oughtibridge
11.09.26	John Fox and Dawn Oughtibridge