Swindon Tuition Centre

Complaints and Appeals Policy

2026-27

Policy name	Policy Owner	Approved by	Review Date	Next Review date
Complaints & Appeals Policy	Director of Strategy	Senior Leadership Team	29.07.26	01.09.27

Policy Updates

Review date	Update Summary	Reviewed by:	Next Review:
29.07.26	Comprehensive review undertaken to align with current legislation, good governance and organisational practice. Policy restructured to provide a clear staged complaints procedure, strengthen impartiality, safeguarding, organisational learning and quality assurance, and align with the wider governance framework.	Director of Strategy	01.09.27

Consultation & Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Leadership Team and will also be reviewed following:

- changes to legislation or statutory guidance;
- safeguarding reviews;
- inspection outcomes;
- commissioner feedback;
- complaints trend analysis;
- organisational learning;
- significant incidents;
- feedback from learners, parents, carers and staff.

Swindon Tuition Centre welcomes feedback from learners, families, commissioners and staff to ensure the complaints process remains transparent, fair and effective.

Statutory Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to, but not limited to:

- Education Act 1996
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Alternative Provision Statutory Guidance
- SEND Code of Practice: 0–25 Years

Purpose

Swindon Tuition Centre is committed to providing high-quality education and support for all learners.

We recognise that, despite our best efforts, there may be occasions when individuals wish to raise a concern, provide feedback or make a complaint.

We believe that complaints, when handled positively and fairly, provide valuable opportunities to:

- resolve concerns promptly;
- rebuild trust and confidence;

- improve services;
- strengthen safeguarding practice;
- identify organisational learning;
- improve communication;
- promote continuous improvement.

The purpose of this policy is therefore to establish a fair, transparent and accessible complaints procedure which enables concerns to be investigated promptly, proportionately and respectfully.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- learners;
- parents and carers;
- staff;
- volunteers;
- contractors;
- commissioners;
- partner schools;
- local authorities;
- members of the public.

The policy covers complaints relating to:

- education provision;
- safeguarding;
- behaviour;
- attendance;
- communication;
- service delivery;
- facilities;
- administration;
- organisational practice.

It does not replace statutory procedures relating to:

- safeguarding allegations;
- whistleblowing;
- staff grievances;
- disciplinary investigations;
- subject access requests;
- employment matters.

These are managed under the relevant organisational policies.

Guiding Principles

Swindon Tuition Centre is committed to ensuring that all complaints are managed fairly, consistently and without prejudice.

Our approach is underpinned by the following principles:

- complaints are welcomed as opportunities to improve;
- all complainants will be treated with dignity and respect;
- complaints will be investigated objectively;
- confidentiality will be maintained wherever possible;
- safeguarding concerns will always take precedence;
- organisational learning will be embedded following complaints;
- responses will be proportionate, timely and evidence-informed;
- no individual will be disadvantaged for raising a genuine concern.

Definitions

Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about Swindon Tuition Centre's services, provision, staff, decisions or organisational practice where a response or resolution is expected.

Concern

A concern is an issue or query that may usually be resolved quickly through informal discussion without requiring the formal complaints procedure.

Comment

A comment is feedback, suggestion or observation intended to improve services and may not require a formal response.

Appeal

An appeal is a request for a complaint decision to be reviewed where the complainant believes the complaints procedure has not been followed correctly or significant new information has become available.

Complainant

A complainant is any learner, parent, carer, member of staff, volunteer, commissioner, partner organisation or member of the public raising a concern under this policy.

Vexatious or Unreasonable Complaint

A vexatious or unreasonable complaint is one which is pursued in a way that is disproportionate, abusive, repetitive or without reasonable grounds, despite the matter having already been fully investigated and responded to.

Roles & Responsibilities

Proprietor / Owner & Director

The Proprietor / Owner & Director is responsible for:

- approving this policy;
- ensuring complaints are managed fairly and effectively;
- overseeing complaints that reach Stage Three;
- appointing an independent Complaints Panel where required;
- ensuring organisational learning is embedded following significant complaints.

Director of Strategy

The Director of Strategy is responsible for:

- monitoring complaint trends;
- ensuring complaints are recorded appropriately;
- supporting policy implementation;
- reviewing complaints data to identify opportunities for improvement;
- coordinating policy review.

Senior Leadership Team

Members of the Senior Leadership Team are responsible for:

- investigating complaints allocated to them;
- responding fairly, objectively and within agreed timescales;
- maintaining accurate complaint records;
- identifying safeguarding concerns arising during investigations;
- implementing agreed actions.

Managers

Managers are responsible for:

- resolving concerns informally wherever possible;
- responding promptly to concerns raised;
- escalating complaints appropriately;
- maintaining respectful communication throughout the process.

Staff

All staff are expected to:

- treat concerns seriously;
- cooperate with investigations;
- maintain confidentiality;
- report safeguarding concerns immediately;
- contribute to organisational learning following complaints where appropriate.

Learners, Parents and Carers

Learners, parents and carers are encouraged to:

- raise concerns promptly;
- provide accurate information;
- engage respectfully throughout the complaints process;
- work collaboratively towards resolution where appropriate.

Stage 1

Informal Resolution

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Stage 2

Formal Complaint

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Stage 3

Director Review

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Stage 4

Complaints Panel

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Swindon Tuition Centre encourages concerns to be raised as soon as possible so that they can be resolved quickly, fairly and informally wherever appropriate.

Where appropriate, concerns should initially be discussed with the most appropriate member of staff, AP Manager or relevant service lead. Many issues can be resolved through open communication without the need to progress to the formal complaints procedure.

Informal concerns may be raised verbally, by telephone or in writing.

The member of staff receiving the concern will:

- listen carefully and respectfully;
- seek to understand the issue;
- clarify the desired outcome;
- consider whether immediate action can resolve the concern;
- seek support from a manager where appropriate;
- identify any safeguarding concerns requiring immediate escalation.

Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, or is considered sufficiently serious, the complainant will be advised how to submit a formal complaint.

Swindon Tuition Centre aims to acknowledge informal concerns within two working days and resolve them wherever reasonably possible within ten working days.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

Where informal resolution has not been successful, or where the complaint is sufficiently serious, a formal complaint may be submitted.

Formal complaints should normally:

- be made in writing;
- clearly describe the concern;
- include relevant dates and information;
- explain the outcome being sought.

Complaints may be submitted via:

- the Swindon Tuition Centre complaints form;
- email;
- letter.

Upon receipt:

- the complaint will be acknowledged within two working days;
- an appropriate investigating officer will be appointed;

- the complainant will be informed of the investigation process and expected timescales.

The investigating officer will:

- gather relevant evidence;
- meet with individuals where appropriate;
- review documentation;
- consider safeguarding implications;
- maintain confidentiality;
- produce a written outcome.

A written response will normally be provided within 15 working days. Where this is not possible, the complainant will be updated with revised timescales and reasons for the delay.

Stage 3 – Director Review

Where the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Stage Two outcome, they may request that the complaint is reviewed by the Proprietor / Owner & Director.

The request should normally be made within ten working days of receiving the Stage Two outcome and should explain:

- why the complainant remains dissatisfied;
- any procedural concerns;
- any significant new evidence not previously considered.

The Director will review:

- the original complaint;
- the investigation;
- the evidence considered;
- the outcome reached;
- any additional information submitted.

The Director may:

- uphold the original decision;
- amend the outcome;
- recommend further investigation;
- identify organisational learning;
- recommend service improvements.

A written response will normally be provided within 15 working days.

Stage 4 – Complaints Panel

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Director's review, they may request that the complaint is considered by an independent Complaints Panel.

The request should normally be submitted within ten working days of the Director's decision.

The Complaints Panel will:

- consist of individuals who have had no prior involvement in the complaint;
- include at least one independent member;
- consider whether the complaints procedure has been followed fairly;
- review the available evidence;
- hear representations from the complainant where appropriate;
- reach an impartial decision.

The Panel may:

- uphold the complaint;
- partially uphold the complaint;
- dismiss the complaint;
- recommend further investigation;
- recommend service improvements;
- recommend policy or procedural changes.

The Panel's decision will normally be communicated in writing within five working days of the hearing and will represent the final stage of Swindon Tuition Centre's internal complaints procedure.

Safeguarding Concerns

Where information received during the complaints process indicates that a learner or adult may be at risk of harm, safeguarding procedures will take precedence over the complaints process.

Concerns will be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and, where appropriate, the Managing Allegations and Concerns About Adults Policy or Low-Level Concerns Policy.

The complaints process may be paused, adapted or run alongside safeguarding procedures where necessary to protect learners, staff and the integrity of any investigation.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled with appropriate sensitivity and confidentiality.

Information will only be shared with those who need it in order to investigate, respond to or resolve the complaint.

All personal information will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR and Swindon Tuition Centre's Data Protection Policy.

While every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality, this cannot be guaranteed where safeguarding concerns or legal obligations require information to be shared.

Record Keeping

Accurate records will be maintained throughout every stage of the complaints process.

Records may include:

- complaint correspondence;
- investigation notes;
- witness statements;
- evidence considered;
- meeting notes;
- outcomes;
- agreed actions;
- lessons learned.

Complaint records will be retained securely in accordance with Swindon Tuition Centre's Record Retention Policy.

Complaint trends will be reviewed periodically by the Leadership Team to support quality assurance, risk management and continuous improvement.

Quality Assurance & Monitoring

Swindon Tuition Centre is committed to monitoring the effectiveness of its complaints process to ensure concerns are managed fairly, consistently and efficiently.

Quality assurance activities may include:

- analysis of complaint themes and trends;
- monitoring response times;
- review of complaint outcomes;
- safeguarding audits;
- learner and parent feedback;
- commissioner feedback;
- policy compliance monitoring;
- leadership review.

Findings will be used to strengthen organisational practice and improve service delivery.

Organisational Learning & Continuous Improvement

Swindon Tuition Centre recognises that complaints provide valuable opportunities to strengthen services and improve learner outcomes.

Learning arising from complaints, safeguarding reviews, audits, inspections and stakeholder feedback will be used to:

- improve policies and procedures;
- strengthen communication;
- enhance safeguarding practice;
- identify staff training needs;
- improve quality assurance;
- reduce recurrence of issues;
- promote a culture of openness and continuous improvement.

The organisation is committed to ensuring that lessons learned from complaints are translated into meaningful improvements wherever appropriate.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following Swindon Tuition Centre policies:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Learner Attendance & Engagement Policy
- Alternative Provision, SEND & Inclusion Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Staff & Volunteers Code of Conduct
- Managing Allegations and Concerns About Adults Policy
- Low-Level Concerns Policy
- Whistleblowing (Speaking Up) Policy
- Data Protection Policy