



PARITY
EDUCATION

Shaping Futures
With Equal Opportunities

Complaints Policy

Clear • fair • accessible • proportionate

Alternative Provision • EOTAS • SEND • Tuition • Mentoring

Organisation	Parity Education and Careers Services Ltd
Policy owner	Operations Director
Version	2.0 - August 2026
Last reviewed	August 2026
Next review due	August 2027, or sooner if legislation, commissioner requirements or organisational practice changes
Applies to	Learners, parents/carers, commissioners, schools, local authorities, employees, tutors, contractors and other stakeholders
Related policies	Safeguarding and Child Protection; Whistleblowing; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Behaviour; Data Protection; Safer Recruitment; Tutor & Contractor Handbook

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1. Policy statement

Parity Education aims to provide safe, high-quality and responsive alternative provision. We welcome feedback and take concerns seriously. Complaints give us an opportunity to resolve problems, put things right where necessary and identify learning that can improve our provision.

No learner, parent/carers, staff member or other person will be disadvantaged because they have raised a genuine concern or complaint in good faith. Complaints will be handled fairly, respectfully, proportionately and as promptly as possible.

2. Purpose and scope

This policy explains how concerns and complaints about Parity Education services will be received, investigated, responded to and reviewed. It is designed for Parity Education's current model of 1:1 and small-scale alternative provision delivered in homes, community venues, schools and online.

The procedure is available to learners, parents and carers, commissioning schools and local authorities, professionals, members of the public and others who receive or are directly affected by Parity Education services.

3. Our principles

- Resolve concerns at the earliest appropriate stage wherever possible.
- Listen carefully and establish what the complainant believes has gone wrong and what outcome they are seeking.
- Keep the process accessible, including for children and young people and people with SEND or communication needs.
- Investigate objectively and avoid conflicts of interest.
- Keep people informed where a response will take longer than expected.
- Protect confidentiality while sharing information with those who need it to investigate or safeguard.
- Distinguish complaints from safeguarding concerns, whistleblowing, employment matters and other procedures.
- Use complaints as a source of organisational learning.

4. Who can make a complaint

A complaint may be made by a learner, parent or carer, commissioner, school, local authority, professional, member of staff or contractor where they are using this procedure in an appropriate capacity, or another person directly affected by Parity Education's service.

A learner may complain directly. They do not have to ask a parent or carer to complain for them. A trusted adult may support them if they wish.

5. What this procedure covers

- Quality, reliability or conduct of provision.
- Communication with learners, families, commissioners or professionals.
- Actions or decisions by Parity Education staff, tutors or contractors.
- Failure to follow an agreed process or commissioned arrangement.
- Professional conduct or boundaries where the matter is not primarily a safeguarding allegation.
- Equality, accessibility or reasonable-adjustment concerns.
- Administrative, reporting or service-delivery concerns.

6. Matters dealt with under another procedure

Some concerns must be managed under a different process. We will explain this where it applies.

- Safeguarding concerns or allegations that a child may be at risk of harm - Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures take priority.
- Allegations about an adult who works with children that may meet safeguarding allegation thresholds - these will be referred to the DSL and, where appropriate, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- Whistleblowing by a worker about wrongdoing in the public interest - Whistleblowing Policy.
- Employment, contractual, disciplinary or grievance matters - the relevant employment or contractor process.
- Data-protection rights requests or information-security incidents - Data Protection procedures, although service complaints about data handling may also be considered here.
- Matters that are subject to active police, court, tribunal or statutory investigation where proceeding with a complaint could prejudice that process.

7. Accessibility and reasonable adjustments

Parity Education will make reasonable adjustments to the complaints process where required. A complaint does not have to be written in a particular style or use a form. We may accept a complaint by email, telephone or another accessible method and record it in writing with the complainant's agreement.

- Support a learner to explain their concern in their own words.
- Use simplified language, visual information or additional processing time.
- Allow a supporter, advocate or trusted adult to assist.
- Offer a telephone or online meeting where this is more accessible.
- Provide information in an alternative format where reasonably practicable.

8. How to raise a concern or complaint

Concerns and complaints should normally be sent to Parity Education using the published contact details on our website or through the usual Parity Education contact route. The person receiving the complaint must ensure it reaches the appropriate manager and is recorded.

It is helpful, but not essential, to include what happened, when it happened, who was involved, any steps already taken and the outcome sought. The complaint form at Appendix A may be used if preferred.

9. Stage 1 - informal resolution

Many concerns can be resolved quickly through an early conversation. Where appropriate, the person receiving the concern will listen, clarify the issue and either respond directly or refer it to the appropriate manager.

We aim to acknowledge an informal concern promptly and normally seek to resolve it within 5 working days. More complex matters may need longer. If so, we will explain the next step or expected timescale.

A complainant does not have to use Stage 1 where the matter is serious, sensitive, concerns the person who would ordinarily handle it, or they reasonably prefer to make a formal complaint.

10. Stage 2 - formal complaint

If a concern has not been resolved informally, or it is appropriate to begin formally, the complaint should be referred to the Operations Director or another senior leader who has not been materially involved in the events complained about.

Parity Education will normally acknowledge a formal complaint within 3 working days. The acknowledgement will confirm who is handling the complaint and, where possible, the expected response date.

The investigator may:

- Review session records, emails, messages, reports, risk assessments or other relevant documents.
- Speak with the complainant and the person or people complained about.
- Seek information from tutors, staff, commissioners or other relevant professionals.

- Consider applicable policies, commissioned requirements and reasonable adjustments.
- Clarify the outcome the complainant is seeking.

We aim to provide a written Stage 2 response within 15 working days of acknowledging the complaint. Where this is not possible because of complexity, absence, safeguarding or another relevant reason, we will explain the delay and provide a revised timescale.

The response will summarise the issues considered, the findings, whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld, any appropriate action, and how to request a Stage 3 review.

11. Stage 3 - review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a review within 10 working days of the Stage 2 response. The request should explain why they believe the complaint was not handled fairly or adequately, or identify significant information they believe was overlooked.

The review will be undertaken by a director, senior person or other suitably independent reviewer who was not responsible for the Stage 2 decision. For a small organisation, this may include an appropriately independent external person where necessary to avoid a conflict of interest.

Stage 3 is a review of the handling and outcome of the complaint. It is not automatically a complete reinvestigation, although further enquiries may be made where required.

We aim to issue the final response within 15 working days of accepting the review request. The final response will explain the review findings and confirm that Parity Education's internal complaints process is complete.

12. Complaints about senior leaders

A complaint about a tutor or staff member should not be handled by that person. A complaint about the Operations Director should be referred to the Head of Provision. A complaint about the Head of Provision should be referred to the Operations Director or another director/suitably independent person. A complaint involving both senior leaders will be allocated to another director or appropriately independent reviewer.

Where a complaint contains a safeguarding allegation about any adult working with children, Section 13 applies regardless of role or seniority.

13. Safeguarding complaints

Safeguarding takes priority over the complaints process. If a complaint suggests that a child is at risk of harm, contains a disclosure, raises an allegation about an adult working with children, or otherwise meets a safeguarding threshold, the matter must be passed immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL.

Parity Education may pause or limit the complaints investigation while safeguarding agencies, the LADO, police or another statutory body consider the matter. The complainant will be told as much as can appropriately be shared.

A safeguarding concern must never be delayed because a person has labelled it as a complaint.

14. Complaints involving tutors or contractors

Parity Education remains responsible for handling complaints about services delivered on its behalf by tutors and contractors. A tutor or contractor must not attempt to privately resolve a significant complaint with a family or commissioner without informing Parity Education.

Tutors and contractors must cooperate with reasonable enquiries, preserve relevant records and maintain confidentiality. Where a complaint also raises concerns about suitability, conduct or safeguarding, Parity Education may take separate contractual, safer-recruitment or safeguarding action.

15. Timescales

Stage	Normal target
Stage 1 - informal	Resolve within 5 working days where possible
Stage 2 - formal	Acknowledge within 3 working days; written response normally within 15 working days

Working days normally exclude weekends and bank holidays. Where a school or local-authority commissioner requires a different contractual timescale, Parity Education will follow the applicable requirement where it is reasonable and has been agreed.

Complaints should normally be raised within 3 months of the event or, where a series of related events has occurred, within 3 months of the most recent event. We may consider older complaints where there is a good reason for the delay or where the matter is particularly serious.

16. Outcomes and remedies

A complaint may be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. Where something has gone wrong, the response should focus on an appropriate remedy rather than defensiveness.

- An explanation or clarification.
- An apology.
- Correcting inaccurate information or an administrative error.
- Changing an arrangement, communication method or reasonable adjustment.
- Reviewing a risk assessment, support plan or operational process.
- Additional supervision, training or management action.
- Raising an issue with a commissioner or another organisation where responsibility sits outside Parity Education.
- Policy or service improvement.

Confidentiality may prevent us from telling a complainant about specific disciplinary, contractual or safeguarding action taken in relation to another person.

17. Complaints made on behalf of a learner

Parents and carers will usually be able to raise concerns about their child's provision. Where a young person has sufficient understanding and wishes to express their own view, that view should be heard and given appropriate weight.

Where another adult seeks to complain on behalf of a learner, Parity Education may need to establish consent or authority before sharing personal information, unless safeguarding or another lawful basis permits disclosure.

18. Anonymous complaints

Anonymous concerns will be considered according to seriousness, credibility, safeguarding implications and the information available. An anonymous complaint may be difficult to investigate fully or respond to, but it will not be ignored solely because the complainant has not provided their identity.

19. Unreasonably persistent or abusive contact

Parity Education will not label a complaint as unreasonable simply because it is persistent, challenging or critical. However, we may manage contact where behaviour becomes abusive, threatening, discriminatory, excessively repetitive or places a disproportionate demand on the organisation after the complaint has been properly considered.

Any restrictions will be proportionate, documented, normally time-limited and will not prevent genuine new safeguarding concerns or materially new complaints from being considered.

- Using a single named contact.
- Requiring communication in writing where appropriate.
- Setting reasonable limits on the frequency of repetitive contact.
- Declining to revisit issues that have completed the complaints process unless significant new evidence is provided.

20. Withdrawing a complaint

A complainant may withdraw their complaint at any stage. Parity Education may nevertheless continue to consider the underlying issue where there are safeguarding, safety, regulatory, contractual or organisational-learning reasons to do so.

21. Records, confidentiality and data protection

Parity Education will keep an appropriate record of formal complaints, investigations, outcomes and actions. Records will be stored securely and accessed only by those who need them for legitimate purposes.

Complaint information will be handled in accordance with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Parity Education's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Statement. Information may be shared with commissioners, safeguarding partners, insurers, legal advisers, regulators or other bodies where there is a lawful and appropriate reason.

Complaint records will be retained in accordance with Parity Education's retention arrangements. Safeguarding information contained within a complaint will be managed and retained under safeguarding requirements rather than deleted simply because the complaint is closed.

22. Learning from complaints

Complaints are an important source of quality-assurance information. Senior leaders will review themes and significant complaints to identify whether changes are required to practice, training, communication, staffing, systems or policy.

Learning should be proportionate to Parity Education's size and model. We do not need to create unnecessary bureaucracy, but recurring issues should be recognised and acted upon.

23. External escalation and commissioner involvement

Parity Education is an independent non-school alternative provision provider. The internal Stage 3 response normally concludes Parity Education's own complaints procedure.

Where provision has been commissioned by a school, local authority, Virtual School or another organisation, the complainant may also be able to raise concerns through that commissioner's complaints or contract-management process. Parity Education will cooperate with reasonable commissioner enquiries.

Nothing in this policy prevents a person from contacting the police, children's social care, the LADO, the Information Commissioner's Office or another relevant statutory body where that body has jurisdiction. We will not describe an external body as an appeal route unless it actually has authority to consider the matter.

24. Policy approval and review

This Version 2.0 replaces the Complaints Policy approved in September 2025. The previous policy used outdated roles, including Lead Tutor and Head of Outreach, and a school-style three-person complaints panel. The updated procedure reflects Parity Education's current structure and non-school alternative provision model.

Version	Date	Summary	Status
1.0	1 September 2025	Previous complaints procedure under former organisational structure and branding.	Superseded
2.0	August 2026	Rewritten for current AP model; accessible three-stage procedure; updated roles, safeguarding route, commissioner involvement, data protection and complaint-learning arrangements.	For approval

Approved by: Patrick Iberi - Head of Provision / Designated Safeguarding Lead; Nicola Catherall - Operations Director / Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Approval date: August 2026

Next review: August 2027, or earlier if legislation, commissioner requirements or organisational practice changes.



Appendix A - Complaint form

You do not have to use this form. A complaint can be made by email, telephone or another accessible method. This form is provided for anyone who finds it helpful.

Your name

Relationship to learner (if applicable)

Learner's name (if applicable)

Email / telephone

Preferred method of contact

Do you require any reasonable adjustment to use the complaints process?

What is your complaint about?

What happened, and when?

What have you already done to try to resolve it?

What outcome would you like?

Please send this form using the current contact details published by Parity Education. If your concern is about a child's immediate safety, do not wait for the complaints process - follow the safeguarding/emergency route.