Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy

Policy owner: Proprietor

Review date: September 2027

Complaints contact: rosie.aylward@compass-learning.co.uk

This policy explains how learners, families, commissioners and others can raise concerns about Compass Learning & Education and how we will respond. It covers our centre-based, school-based, community and outreach work, including services delivered by Compass staff. We welcome feedback and will treat anyone who raises a concern fairly and without disadvantage.

Raising a Concern

A concern or complaint can be made in person, by telephone, by email or in writing. A learner may speak to any trusted member of staff, who will help them put their concern into words and pass it to the right person. A parent, carer, school or local authority may contact the Head of Provision using the contact details given at referral and published with this policy. We will accept a complaint made on someone's behalf with their agreement where appropriate. We will make reasonable adjustments, including help to communicate verbally, in another format or with an advocate.

Please tell us what happened, when it happened and what you would like us to do, as far as you can. We will not refuse a complaint because it is unwritten or because these details are incomplete. Staff will record verbal complaints accurately and check the account with the complainant where practicable. We will ask what outcome is sought, but cannot promise a particular result.

How we respond

We will first check whether the concern needs an immediate safety response. If it does, the safeguarding procedure takes priority and we will contact the relevant agencies and commissioning school or local authority as required. A complaint about service quality may continue alongside that process where doing so will not interfere with a safeguarding or external investigation.

For other concerns, we will try to resolve the matter promptly with the people involved, unless the complainant wants a formal investigation or informal discussion would be inappropriate. We will listen to the complainant and the person complained about, consider relevant records, and explain our decision and any action we can share. The person whose conduct is complained about will not investigate or decide their own case.

Stage	What happens	Target timescale
Informal	Discussion and practical resolution where appropriate.	Acknowledge within 2 working days; aim to resolve within 5.
Formal	The Head of Provision investigates and gives a written outcome. A verbal complaint can be recorded as formal.	Acknowledge within 2 working days; respond within 10.
Review	A person uninvolved in the original decision reviews the handling and outcome.	Request within 10 working days; acknowledge within 2 and respond within 15.

Working days means Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays and days when Compass is closed. If we cannot meet a target, we will explain the reason and give a revised date. We may agree a different timetable with the complainant for a complex case or where an external process is underway. A concern can move straight to the formal stage when appropriate.

Who handles the complaint

The Head of Provision normally coordinates complaints. If the complaint is about the Director, the Director will arrange an external body to coordinate the complaint response. It will be communicated in writing who is handling the complaint and outcome.

Complaints about a Compass staff member or a service delivered in a school, home or community venue are still covered by this policy. We will liaise with the commissioning organisation under the referral agreement, especially where a placement, safety, attendance or continuity of support may be affected. A school or local authority may also operate its own complaints process. We will tell the complainant which process applies to which issue and will not delay a safety referral while responsibility is clarified.

Safeguarding and other routes

A disclosure of abuse, an allegation about an adult working with children or a concern about a child's immediate safety must be passed promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). If the concern is about the DSL or Proprietor, it must go to the named alternative safeguarding contact and, where appropriate, directly to the local authority designated officer (LADO), children's social care or police. Staff and families may contact statutory services directly. The safeguarding and managing allegations procedures govern these steps, including concerns that do not meet the LADO harm threshold.

Employment grievances follow the relevant staff procedure. Complaints about an education, health and care plan decision follow the local authority's statutory routes. A complaint about personal data

rights or a suspected data breach will also be referred to the person responsible for data protection. We will explain the relevant route rather than simply reject a concern that reaches us under this policy.

Fairness, records and learning

A learner may complain without fear of losing support or being treated differently. We will consider anonymous concerns on the information available, with particular care where safety is involved. We will keep a secure complaints record showing the concern, decisions, correspondence, actions and learning, with access limited to those who need it. Records will be retained under Compass's retention schedule and shared with commissioners or agencies only where necessary and lawful. Termly review of themes will inform training and service improvement.

We will manage abusive or threatening contact proportionately and may set reasonable communication arrangements after explaining them in writing. This will not prevent us from considering new evidence, a new complaint or a safeguarding concern. We will not describe a complaint as malicious merely because it is unsubstantiated.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied

Our review is the final stage within Compass. A complainant may also raise concerns with the commissioning school or local authority, or contact children's social care, the LADO or police where relevant. We will give the correct commissioner contact details for the placement on request. This policy does not remove any statutory rights or the ability to contact an external body directly.

Comments, compliments and policy review

Suggestions and compliments can be given through the same contact routes. We will share them with relevant staff where appropriate and use them in quality assurance. The Proprietor will review this policy at least annually and sooner following a significant complaint, change in delivery or updated guidance.