



*Elmley Dray
School*

Compliments, Concerns and Complaints Policy

The aim of Elmley Dray School is to carry on activities which benefit learners, as well as the community. The community interest company, Elmley Dray (without limitation) is dedicated to support people with autism or autism traits, FASD, social and communication challenges, mental health and wellbeing difficulties and their families in Kent to improve their life outcomes (eg. education, health, care and employment).

This is motivated by the Director/s who are experts by experience, or qualified educationalists.

Rationale

This policy aims to ensure that Elmley Dray School provides its services in an inclusive way by placing the learner at the heart of all decision making and provision of support and guidance.

It is fundamental to Elmley Dray School that each learner, young person and family member's voice is valued and respected in shaping the services that we offer. Therefore we wish to provide a policy and procedure to recognise compliments, concerns and complaints which are raised about our services.

Elmley Dray School records compliments, concerns and complaints in separate folders, with numbers of concerns and complaints recorded and compliments are used to market our services with the permission of the writer on various social media and the website linked to our organisation.

Where a concern or complaint relates to an allegation of sexual harassment, it will be treated as a protected disclosure in line with the Employment Rights Act 2025 (effective April 2026). The school will ensure that anyone raising such a concern is protected from any form of detriment.

Purpose

We are committed to providing the best possible service for everyone who we support and work with. We recognise that the way we manage and respond to complaints, compliments and comments is an important part of this. By receiving feedback from the people who use our services, we can make sure that we did the best we can in the context of what we are funded to do. And if we've done something not as well as they would have liked, we need to know that too. Only then can we learn and improve.

This policy uses the following definitions: -

a compliment is

an expression of praise concerning a service received.

a concern is

a suggestion for how a service can be improved.

a complaint is

an expression of dissatisfaction about a standard of service.

Compliments, Concerns and Complaints can be raised by users of our services, carers and/or others acting on behalf of a current or potential user of any of the services normally provided by the organisation.

All concerns and complaints will be received positively and be used as a means to improve the quality of services. People who use our services will not receive a lesser service from us if they raise concerns or make a complaint.

To provide a clear route for individuals to raise concerns regarding their data protection rights, as required by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

Practice

The way we manage concerns and complaints will be

Compliments

We recognise that when people have taken the time to offer a compliment their contribution should be acknowledged with a response. Anyone making a compliment will receive a written communication summarising the nature of their comment or compliment and how we have responded. A request will be made that the compliment is used for any marketing of the services offered by Elmley Dray School and this authority will be noted on the compliment which will be held on file.

All data from complaints, concerns and compliments will be discussed by the Director or/and the Professional Advisory Team at all stages in order to ensure that there is a consistency in our determination and approach to improving our service.

Concerns and Complaints

The way we manage concerns and complaints will be

- Honest, constructive and open
- Timely, dealing with feedback as quickly and effectively as we can
- Consistent and fair, avoiding bias
- Sensitive, with due care being paid to individual differences and needs
- Respectful, making sure anyone giving feedback is kept informed of progress
- Accessible, ensuring appropriate support is in place to enable participation
- Confidential - we cannot respond to any concerns or complaints that are anonymous, but confidentiality will be respected at all times as set out in this policy

Nature of Complaint

Where a complaint involves the use of restrictive intervention or reasonable force, the investigation will verify that the school met its statutory duty to notify parents/carers of the incident on the same day it occurred, in accordance with the April 2026 'Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force' guidance.

Concerns and Complaints Process

We encourage parents to frame complaints in a constructive, factual manner. In line with DfE guidance (2026), we discourage the use of social media to pursue complaints, as this can hinder the collaborative resolution process.

There are three stages to our Concerns and Complaints process: -

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

At this stage an attempt should be made to resolve the concern raised informally and to find a solution that will suit everyone concerned. The complainant should be encouraged to speak about their concerns to the Headteacher of Elmley Dray School, who will seek to find a resolution for the complaint raised. All complaints raised at this stage 1 level should be sent to ccc@elmleydrayschool.co.uk. Most concerns can be dealt with at this informal stage, with communication with the parents on the telephone or at an arranged meeting. The Headteacher will ensure that any agreement from the resolution discussion will be shared with staff so that our processes or our service can be improved immediately across the school. This stage will be completed within ten working days. The concern will be held on file for 12 months and may well prompt a review of policy and procedure. Ensuring that parents or carers are now happy with the resolution will be part of this process with a follow up discussion planned to ensure that standards are being maintained and monitored. If however the concern has not been resolved, then this will move forward to a formal complaint.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

If a complainant has a problem that cannot be sorted out through the informal stage 1 process, or they are not happy with the outcome of any informal resolution, they will be supported by the administrative team to make a formal complaint. This formal complaint needs to be in writing. This can be dictated to the administrative team if required.

Details of a complaint will then be provided to an identified Investigating Officer from the Senior Leadership Team of the school nominated by the Proprietor/Director(s) who is not involved with the formal complaint.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, then the complaint will have to be addressed to Hayley Furnell, Director for Elmley Dray School.

The complainant will have an acknowledgement of the complaint by letter or email within 5 working days stating who the identified Investigating Officer will be and providing information on the timeline to be adopted for the investigation. The Investigation will take a maximum of 20 working days (or quicker if possible), and within this timeline, the complainant will be advised of the results of the investigation, the suggested remedy and details of how to appeal to stage 3, if unhappy with the outcome.

Should the investigation and offered remedy take more than 20 days to be formalised, then the complainant will be kept informed of the progress being made with respect to the complaint. The complaint and investigation report will be held on file for 12 months and an action plan of any change in the way that Elmley Dray School conducts itself will be completed.

If the complaint and investigation has not brought a satisfactory conclusion for the complainant, and remains unresolved, then the final stage will be started. This represents an appeal of the Stage 2 Complaint and resolution offered and will be conducted by a member of the PAT who is not an employee of the school who has not been involved with the initial investigation within Stage 2.

Stage 3: Appeal Process

If the complainant is not happy with the findings of the investigation in Stage 2, they may request an appeal meeting with an independent team (with evidence not considered by the investigating team during Stage 2).

The appeal request must be put in writing within 5 working days of the date of the explanation letter advising of the findings of the stage 2 investigation. The request must give the reason why the complainant wants the decision reviewed at appeal. If it is not possible for the complainant to put their request in writing on their own, then

the administrative team within Elmley Dray School will explore with them what external support can be given to meet their access needs.

A review of the Stage 1 and 2 process including the information gathered within the investigation and all correspondence, to assess whether the process has followed policy and procedure, has been fairly conducted and has provided an adequate, reasonable response to the concern in stage 1 and/or complaint at stage 2 will begin.

At the final part of the complaints procedure, a panel made up of Directors and members of the Professional Advisory Team who have not been involved with the Stage 2 process will consider the complaint. One member of the panel will be a parent member of the Professional Advisory Team.

The acknowledgement of the Stage 3 appeal will be given by the Independent Panel Member within 5 working days. A letter of explanation to be sent to the complainant within 20 working days advising of the outcome of the appeal. If Stage 2 process and remedy has been upheld, then the complaint process ends, and if there is further remedy being offered as a result of the Appeals process, then this will be presented within the formal written response.

The written response to the complainant will be held on file for 12 months and any recommendations to improve the service or process identified within the Compliments, Concerns and Complaint Policy will be identified and actions completed will be filed to bring the complaint process to a conclusion.

Conclusion

The Compliments, Concerns and Complaints Policy is an important reflective tool which will be used to improve our services. The timelines for dealing with Compliments, Concerns and Complaints will follow the timeframes, maintain confidentiality and will only be published with the consent of the service user. All Elmley Dray School staff will be aware of the policy and procedure and how to manage the receipt of a concern, complaint or even compliment. The review of the policy will ensure that this policy remains fit for purpose or requires adjustment.

Version control - Approval and review

Version No.	Reviewed By	Approved By	Approval Date	Main Change	Review Period
1	Emily Hollis	Hayley Furnell	June 2024	Initial policy approved	Annually
1.1	Emily Hollis	Hayley Furnell	April 2025	Annual review,	Annually

				removal of Interim Headteacher	
1.2	Emily Hollis	Hayley Furnell	August 2025	Early annual review to bring in line with other policies	Annually
2	Emily Hollis	Hayley Furnell	1 April 2026	Updated to reflect Employment's Rights Act 2025, effective April 2026, Data Act 2025 and Restrictive Interventions, effective April 2026	Annually



Hayley Furnell, Director,
on behalf of Elmley Dray School
Dated: 1 April 2026
Next review: 1 April 2027