LIGHTHOUSE
LEARNING PROVISION
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OPERATIONAL AND PUBLIC POLICY

Complaints Policy and Procedure

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Organisation	Lighthouse Learning Provision Ltd
Policy owner	Board of Directors/ Provision Lead (Adam Waldron)
Formal complaints contact	Board of Directors - info@lighthouselearningprovision.co.uk
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Raising a concern will never disadvantage a child or delay safeguarding action. Lighthouse will listen, respond fairly and use complaints to improve.

Policy at a glance

Lighthouse welcomes feedback and concerns as an opportunity to resolve problems and improve. Complaints may be made verbally, in writing or through an advocate. They will be handled fairly, accessibly, promptly and without retaliation. A safeguarding, criminal, health and safety or data-protection concern may be redirected immediately to the appropriate specialist process or external authority.

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1. Purpose and aims

1.1 This policy explains how Lighthouse Learning Provision Ltd receives, considers, investigates, resolves and learns from concerns and complaints about its services, conduct, decisions, communication and operational arrangements.

1.2 Lighthouse aims to:

- make it easy and safe for children, families, commissioners and others to raise concerns;
- resolve concerns at the earliest appropriate stage without creating unnecessary barriers;
- provide a fair opportunity for the complainant and the person complained about to be heard;
- respond within clear timescales and explain any unavoidable delay;
- protect confidentiality while sharing enough information to investigate properly;
- identify safeguarding, legal, regulatory, contractual or professional issues and route them correctly;
- provide proportionate remedies where something has gone wrong; and
- use complaint themes, feedback and outcomes to improve quality, safety and relationships.

1.3 The purpose of the procedure is to reach a fair and reasoned outcome. It is not designed to apportion blame automatically, prevent lawful challenge, replace safeguarding action or determine matters that properly belong to courts, tribunals, regulators, commissioners or statutory agencies.

2. Scope, status and framework

2.1 Lighthouse is an independent non-school alternative provision provider. It is not a maintained school, academy, college or registered independent school. Statutory school complaints requirements therefore do not apply directly to Lighthouse in the same way as they apply to schools and academies. Lighthouse nevertheless adopts relevant Department for Education complaint-handling principles as sector good practice.

2.2 This policy supports the Department for Education voluntary national standards for non-school alternative provision, including accessible policies, clear oversight, partnership with commissioners, feedback from children and families and continuous quality improvement.

2.3 The policy is informed by the Equality Act 2010, Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, relevant contractual duties and public-law or ombudsman routes that may apply to the commissioning school or Local Authority.

2.4 Where another procedure is more appropriate - for example safeguarding, allegations about adults, whistleblowing, staff grievance, disciplinary, data rights, insurance, contractual dispute or statutory appeal - Lighthouse will explain the

correct route. The complaint record will show why the matter was redirected and whether any part remains within this procedure.

3. Principles of complaint handling

- **Child-centred:** the welfare, voice and educational interests of the child are considered throughout.
- **Accessible:** reasonable adjustments, communication support and alternative formats are provided where needed.
- **No detriment:** no child, family member, commissioner, employee, contractor or visitor will be treated unfavourably for raising a genuine concern in good faith.
- **Early resolution:** matters are addressed informally where suitable, but a complainant may request the formal route and serious issues will not be minimised.
- **Impartiality:** the complaint is handled by someone sufficiently independent of the events and people involved.
- **Natural justice:** relevant parties know the substance of the complaint and have a fair opportunity to respond.
- **Proportionality:** the depth of investigation and remedy reflects the seriousness, complexity and impact of the matter.
- **Confidentiality:** information is shared only where necessary, subject to safeguarding, legal and contractual duties.
- **Clear reasons:** decisions distinguish evidence, findings, professional judgement and any remaining uncertainty.
- **Learning:** upheld and partially upheld complaints lead to tracked actions, while non-upheld complaints may still identify communication or practice improvements.

4. Roles, responsibilities and independence

4.1 Board of Directors

The Board has overall accountability for an effective complaints system. It will ensure that complaints are logged, allocated, investigated, responded to, reviewed for themes and retained securely. Directors will provide sufficient authority and resources for complaint handlers to act independently and implement remedies.

4.2 Complaint Manager

For each formal complaint, the Board will appoint a Complaint Manager who has not been directly involved in the matter. The Complaint Manager may be an uninvolved Director, suitably senior person or independent external professional. The appointment and any potential conflict of interest will be recorded.

4.3 Investigator

The Complaint Manager may investigate personally or appoint an investigator. The investigator gathers and evaluates relevant evidence, meets or corresponds with relevant people, maintains a clear audit trail and reports findings without deciding matters outside their authority.

4.4 Review decision-maker

A Stage 3 review must be conducted by a person who was not the Stage 2 investigator or decision-maker and was not materially involved in the events. Where no sufficiently independent Director is available, Lighthouse will appoint an external reviewer or agree an alternative review route with the commissioner.

4.5 All adults working for Lighthouse

- listen respectfully and avoid defensive or dismissive responses;
- record concerns and pass them to the appropriate person promptly;
- preserve relevant documents, messages, CCTV or other evidence;
- maintain confidentiality and avoid discussing the complaint unnecessarily;
- cooperate honestly with investigations; and
- report safeguarding, wrongdoing or immediate safety concerns through the relevant urgent route rather than waiting for the complaints process.

5. Who may complain and what is covered

5.1 A complaint may be made by a child or young person, parent or carer, person with parental responsibility, commissioning school, Local Authority, professional, employee, self-employed practitioner, contractor, volunteer, visitor, neighbour or other person affected by Lighthouse activities.

5.2 Complaints may concern, for example:

- the quality, suitability or delivery of provision;
- communication, administration, attendance reporting or information supplied to commissioners;
- treatment, conduct, language, behaviour support or professional boundaries;
- equality, accessibility, reasonable adjustments or discriminatory treatment;
- health and safety, premises, transport, activities, food or medical arrangements;
- privacy, confidentiality, accuracy or use of personal information;
- failure to follow a published policy, agreed plan or contractual arrangement;
- invoicing, cancellation or service matters, subject to the contract and dispute clauses; or
- the way an earlier concern or complaint was handled.

5.3 Employment grievances, disciplinary matters, capability, protected disclosures, commercial disputes and complaints about decisions made solely by a school, Local Authority or other agency may be handled under different arrangements. Lighthouse will identify any part of the complaint for which it is responsible and signpost the remainder.

6. How to raise a concern or complaint

6.1 Concerns may be raised verbally with any member of the Lighthouse team. Formal complaints should normally be submitted:

- by email to info@lighthouselearningprovision.co.uk, marked PRIVATE - COMPLAINT;
- by post to the Board of Directors, Lighthouse Learning Provision Ltd, 231 Whaplod Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 1UL; or
- through an agreed commissioner or advocate where the complainant needs support.

6.2 A complaint does not need to use legal language or a specific form. It is helpful to explain what happened, the date or period involved, who was involved, what action has already been taken, the effect of the issue and the outcome sought. Lighthouse will help a complainant clarify the issues where needed.

6.3 Any staff member receiving a complaint must pass it to a Director or the appointed Complaint Manager promptly. Urgent matters must be communicated verbally and not left in an unattended inbox.

6.4 Compliments, suggestions and routine requests for information may be recorded separately, but will be treated as complaints where the person expresses dissatisfaction and seeks a response or remedy.

7. Accessibility, representation and time limits

7.1 Reasonable adjustments and communication support

Lighthouse will anticipate and respond to barriers that may prevent a disabled person, child with SEND, person with limited literacy, person using another language or person experiencing distress from accessing the procedure. Adjustments may include verbal submission, Easy Read or pictorial formats, additional time, a quiet meeting, interpreter or communication support, accessible venues, remote attendance, breaks and help from a trusted adult or advocate.

7.2 Representation and accompaniment

A complainant may be supported or represented by a parent, carer, advocate, friend, professional or commissioner. Lighthouse may ask for consent or evidence of authority before sharing confidential information. A representative should act respectfully and accurately reflect the complainant's wishes.

7.3 Time limit for raising a complaint

Complaints should normally be raised within three months of the event or, for a series of events, within three months of the most recent event. Lighthouse may accept a later complaint where there is good reason, the person could not reasonably complain earlier, the impact is continuing, the matter is serious or evidence remains available. Safeguarding concerns are never rejected because of age alone.

7.4 Working days and extensions

Working days are Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays. Lighthouse will maintain arrangements to receive urgent complaints during closure periods. Where complexity, illness, availability of witnesses or external-agency involvement makes the target date unrealistic, the complainant will be told the reason and given a revised date. Extensions must not be open-ended.

8. Safeguarding, allegations, whistleblowing and urgent risk

> **Urgent safeguarding rule**
> A complaint that indicates a child may be at risk must be reported immediately to Adam Waldron, Director and DSL, or Rachel Waldron, Director, Deputy DSL and Named Safeguarding Person. Immediate danger: call 999. Complaint timescales never delay protective action.

8.1 Any complaint containing a child-protection concern is passed immediately to the DSL or Deputy DSL and managed under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. The complaints process may pause, continue in parallel or be limited to matters that do not prejudice statutory enquiries.

8.2 An allegation or concern about an adult working with children is managed through the allegations and low-level concerns procedure, including LADO consultation where required. Lighthouse will not conduct an internal complaint investigation that could compromise police, social-care or LADO processes.

8.3 Staff and contractors raising concerns about wrongdoing, concealment, unsafe practice or retaliation may use the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure. A protected or safeguarding disclosure will not be treated merely as a personal grievance.

8.4 Threats, violence, serious health and safety risks, suspected crimes, data breaches and emergencies will be referred promptly to the relevant authority, insurer, commissioner or specialist process. The complainant will be told what can appropriately be shared about the referral.

9. Stage 1 - early and informal resolution

9.1 Where appropriate, the relevant practitioner, Provision Lead or Director will try to resolve the matter through prompt discussion, clarification, explanation, correction or practical action. Serious matters, complaints about senior people and complaints where informal contact would be unsafe or inappropriate may move directly to Stage 2.

9.2 Lighthouse aims to:

- acknowledge the concern within two working days;
- offer a conversation or meeting within four working days where useful; and
- provide an informal response or agreed action within ten working days.

9.3 The person responding will listen, confirm the issues, separate multiple concerns, explore realistic outcomes, summarise any agreement and record significant meetings. An informal resolution may include an explanation, apology, correction, meeting, immediate safety action, communication change or agreed review date.

9.4 The complainant will be told how to move to Stage 2 if dissatisfied. A person is not required to repeat informal stages where they have already attempted resolution or reasonably lack confidence in that route.

10. Stage 2 - formal investigation

10.1 Starting Stage 2

A formal complaint may be made because Stage 1 did not resolve the matter, the issue is serious, the complainant requests a formal response or Lighthouse decides that formal investigation is required. The complaint should be addressed to the Board of Directors.

10.2 Acknowledgement and scope

Lighthouse aims to acknowledge a formal complaint within five working days. The acknowledgement will identify the Complaint Manager, confirm the issues to be investigated, note any matters outside scope, request necessary clarification, explain confidentiality and state the target response date. A complaint form may be offered but is not mandatory.

10.3 Investigation

The Complaint Manager or appointed investigator will prepare an investigation plan, gather proportionate evidence, interview or seek written accounts from relevant people, consider applicable policies and agreements, identify disputed facts and keep a chronology. The complainant and person complained about may suggest relevant evidence or witnesses, but the investigator decides what is necessary and proportionate.

10.4 Formal response

Lighthouse aims to issue the Stage 2 response within twenty working days of receiving a sufficiently clear complaint. The response will:

- summarise the complaint and the process followed;
- state the evidence and policies considered without disclosing information unlawfully;
- give a finding for each issue: upheld, partially upheld, not upheld, inconclusive or outside scope;
- explain the reasons for each finding;
- identify any remedy, improvement action, responsible person and timescale;
- explain any information that cannot be provided and why; and
- set out how to request a Stage 3 review.

10.5 Where external proceedings prevent a complete response, Lighthouse will provide what information it safely can, explain the restriction and state whether the complaint will be reconsidered after those proceedings.

11. Stage 3 - review of the formal response

11.1 A complainant who remains dissatisfied may request a Stage 3 review in writing within twenty working days of the Stage 2 response. Lighthouse may accept a late request for good reason.

11.2 The request should identify why the complainant considers that the process or outcome was flawed, for example: relevant evidence was overlooked; the procedure was not followed; there was bias or conflict; findings were unreasonable on the evidence; or the remedy was disproportionate.

11.3 The reviewer does not normally reinvestigate every fact or consider entirely new complaints. New issues may be returned to Stage 2 or treated as a separate complaint. The review will consider whether:

- the complaint was properly scoped and relevant evidence was obtained;
- the investigation and decision were fair and sufficiently independent;

- findings were supported by the evidence and applicable policy;
- safeguarding, equality, data-protection and contractual issues were addressed;
- the response was clear and proportionate; and
- agreed actions or remedies are appropriate and capable of implementation.

11.4 Lighthouse aims to acknowledge the review request within five working days and issue the final internal response within twenty working days. The reviewer may uphold the Stage 2 decision, vary a finding or remedy, require further investigation, identify additional learning or return a matter for corrective action.

11.5 The Stage 3 response is Lighthouse's final internal decision unless it expressly offers another step. It will identify any relevant external or commissioner route.

12. Complaints involving Directors or conflicts of interest

12.1 A complaint about a Director must be handled by another Director who was not involved. A complaint involving Adam Waldron should not be investigated or decided by Adam Waldron; a complaint involving Rachel Waldron should not be investigated or decided by Rachel Waldron; a complaint involving Peter Semmens should not be investigated or decided by Peter Semmens.

12.2 Where the complaint involves all available Directors, concerns the Board collectively, or no sufficiently independent internal decision-maker exists, Lighthouse will appoint an external investigator or reviewer, seek an agreed independent route through the commissioner or invite the complainant to proceed directly to the appropriate external body.

12.3 Anyone appointed to handle a complaint must disclose personal, professional, financial or other interests that could reasonably call their independence into question. The Complaint Manager will record how any conflict was managed.

13. Complaints from children and young people

13.1 A child may complain to any trusted Lighthouse adult, the DSL, Deputy DSL, Director, home-school DSL, commissioner, parent, carer or advocate. The child does not need to use the word "complaint", put the concern in writing or follow a hierarchy before being listened to.

13.2 Lighthouse will provide a child-friendly explanation of:

- who they can speak to and how to ask for help;
- what will happen after they raise a concern;
- when information may need to be shared to keep someone safe;
- how they can be supported by a trusted person;
- when they will receive an update; and
- how they can say they remain unhappy or worried.

13.3 The adult will take the child seriously, use communication suited to the child, avoid leading questions, distinguish a complaint from a safeguarding disclosure and record the child's views and desired outcome. The child will not be required to confront the person complained about or take part in mediation where this would be unsafe or inappropriate.

13.4 Feedback will be given in language the child can understand, while protecting other people's confidentiality. The child's home school or commissioner will be informed where the matter affects placement safety, quality or oversight.

14. Investigation standards and fair process

14.1 Clarifying the issues

The investigator will identify each distinct allegation or issue, the relevant period, the decision or conduct complained of, the impact claimed and the outcome sought. The agreed scope will be shared with the complainant and amended if new relevant information arises.

14.2 Evidence

Evidence may include referral and placement records, plans, risk assessments, attendance records, policies, emails, messages, incident records, invoices, photographs created lawfully, CCTV where available, witness accounts and professional advice. Evidence will be obtained lawfully, retained securely and assessed for reliability, relevance and consistency.

14.3 Meetings and interviews

Meetings will be conducted respectfully and may take place in person or remotely. A written note will be made and the person may be invited to comment on factual accuracy. Audio or video recording is not permitted without prior agreement and a clear lawful purpose. Covert recordings may raise privacy and trust concerns, but relevant content will not automatically be ignored solely because it was recorded without agreement.

14.4 Standard of decision-making

Complaint findings are made on the balance of probabilities - whether something is more likely than not to have happened - unless a different legal standard applies. Where evidence is insufficient, the finding may be inconclusive. An inconclusive or non-upheld finding does not mean the complainant acted dishonestly.

14.5 Separation from performance or disciplinary action

The complaint response will explain the service outcome and any remedy that can appropriately be shared. Confidential employment, contractual, disciplinary or capability action will not normally be disclosed, although the complainant may be told that appropriate management action has been taken.

15. Outcomes, remedies and learning

15.1 Depending on the findings and Lighthouse's authority, outcomes may include:

- an explanation, clarification or acknowledgement;
- an apology where service, conduct or communication fell below expectation;
- correction of inaccurate information, subject to lawful record-keeping requirements;
- reconsideration of a decision by an appropriate person;
- a meeting, communication plan or relationship-repair process where safe and voluntary;
- changes to support, staffing, risk controls, transport, timetabling or learning arrangements;
- policy, procedure, record-keeping, supervision or training improvements;
- referral to a commissioner, insurer, regulator, safeguarding body or other authority;
- contractual remedy or refund where justified by the service agreement; or
- no further action where the complaint is not upheld, with reasons explained.

15.2 Remedies should be fair, proportionate, practical and focused on putting the person as close as reasonably possible to the position they would have been in if the fault had not occurred. Lighthouse will not promise outcomes outside its authority or disclose confidential action about another person.

15.3 Improvement actions will be entered on an action log with an owner and deadline. Completion will be checked by a Director who was not solely responsible for the original failure where practicable.

16. External escalation and commissioner routes

16.1 The appropriate external route depends on the subject of the complaint, the child's commissioning arrangements and which body holds the relevant legal duty. Lighthouse will provide accurate signposting but cannot guarantee that an external body has jurisdiction.

Route	Examples	Important note
Home school / commissioning school	Placement suitability, school decisions, safeguarding oversight, attendance, education planning or dissatisfaction involving the school's commissioning responsibilities.	Use the school's published complaints procedure and contact its DSL immediately for safeguarding concerns.
Local Authority commissioner	A Local Authority commissioned placement, EOTAS arrangement, section 19 education, EHCP delivery or action by council officers.	Use the council's complaint process first. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman may consider qualifying complaints about council action after the council has had a reasonable opportunity to respond.
Information Commissioner's Office	Concern that Lighthouse has not complied with data-protection law or has mishandled a data-protection complaint.	Raise the data-protection complaint with Lighthouse first where possible; the person may then complain to the ICO.
LADO / children's social care / police	Allegation about an adult working with children, safeguarding concern, immediate danger or suspected crime.	Use the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and current local authority or emergency route without waiting for internal complaint completion.
Health and Safety Executive / enforcing authority	Serious workplace health and safety concern within the authority's remit.	Use current official reporting or concern routes. Emergencies: call 999.
Ofsted or Department for Education	Issues within their jurisdiction concerning a registered school, commissioning school, illegal-school concern or other regulated matter.	Lighthouse is a non-school provider and Ofsted does not act as a general complaints ombudsman for individual disputes with Lighthouse. Follow the official route applicable to the school or specific regulatory concern.
Courts, tribunals or legal advice	Contract, discrimination, negligence, personal injury, employment or other legal dispute.	Independent legal advice may be appropriate. Internal complaint use does not stop legal time limits from running.

16.2 Where the complainant is unsure, Lighthouse will explain which parts it can decide and provide contact information for the commissioner or relevant body. Urgent safeguarding and legal action must not be delayed while jurisdiction is clarified.

17. Confidentiality, data protection and records

17.1 Complaint information will be processed lawfully, fairly and securely. Access is restricted to people who need the information to manage, investigate, advise on, insure, commission or review the matter. Information may be shared without consent where required by law, necessary to safeguard a child or another person, or justified by another lawful basis.

17.2 A secure complaint record will include the complaint, acknowledgement, scope, evidence, meeting notes, decisions, correspondence, outcome, review, actions and completion evidence. Safeguarding and personnel records will be cross-referenced but stored under their specialist arrangements where appropriate.

17.3 Complaint records will be retained in accordance with Lighthouse's retention schedule, legal obligations, limitation periods, insurer and commissioner requirements. Records will not be kept longer than necessary without a documented reason.

17.4 A complainant may have data-protection rights concerning their own personal information, but this does not create an automatic right to receive confidential information about another child, staff member, witness or family. Access requests will be handled under the Data Protection Policy.

17.5 The existence and broad outcome of formal complaints may be shared with commissioners for oversight, particularly where the complaint affects placement quality, safety or contractual performance. Personal detail will be minimised.

18. Persistent, unreasonable, discriminatory or abusive contact

18.1 Lighthouse will not label a complainant unreasonable merely because they are persistent, distressed, critical, challenging or dissatisfied. Repeated contact may reflect unresolved risk, disability, communication needs, trauma or loss of trust and should first be understood.

18.2 A Director may set proportionate communication arrangements where behaviour becomes threatening, abusive, discriminatory, knowingly false, excessively repetitive, demands action outside Lighthouse's powers, repeatedly reopens a completed complaint without new evidence, or materially prevents safe service delivery. Before restrictions are imposed, Lighthouse will normally:

- consider reasonable adjustments and whether the complaint remains unresolved;
- give a clear warning and examples of the behaviour causing difficulty;
- identify acceptable communication routes and a named contact;
- preserve routes for safeguarding, emergencies and genuinely new matters;
- set a review date and explain how the decision may be challenged; and
- record the reasons and ensure the restriction is no broader or longer than necessary.

18.3 Immediate boundaries may be imposed where there is violence, credible threat, harassment, discriminatory abuse or serious disruption. Police or other authorities may be contacted where appropriate. Restrictions apply to the manner of contact, not to the merits of a genuine safeguarding concern.

19. Anonymous, third-party, duplicate, campaign and withdrawn complaints

19.1 Anonymous complaints

Anonymous information will be considered according to seriousness, credibility, potential risk and the ability to investigate. Safeguarding, fraud, health and safety or criminal concerns may require action even where the source is unknown. A response cannot normally be provided without contact details.

19.2 Complaints made on behalf of another person

Lighthouse will usually require the person's consent or evidence of authority before discussing confidential information with a representative. This does not prevent a person reporting safeguarding or public-interest concerns.

19.3 Duplicate or repeated complaints

Where the same complaint has completed the procedure, Lighthouse may provide the final response again and decline to reinvestigate unless material new evidence, a new event, an implementation failure or a safeguarding concern is identified.

19.4 Complaint campaigns

Where many people raise substantially the same issue, Lighthouse may use a coordinated process, representative meeting or common response while protecting personal information and preserving individual safeguarding or equality issues.

19.5 Withdrawal

A complainant may withdraw at any time. Lighthouse will confirm the withdrawal and may still continue proportionate enquiries where safeguarding, safety, legal compliance, serious misconduct or organisational learning requires it.

20. Monitoring, reporting and policy review

20.1 Directors will review complaint data at least termly, including:

- number, source, subject and stage of complaints;
- acknowledgement and response times;
- outcomes and recurring themes;
- complaints involving safeguarding, equality, health and safety or data protection;
- actions, deadlines and evidence of completion;
- complainant and child feedback where appropriate;
- use and review of communication restrictions; and
- commissioner concerns, contract issues and external findings.

20.2 Reports to the Board will protect confidentiality and focus on assurance, trends and learning. Significant failings will trigger immediate action and policy review rather than waiting for the annual cycle.

20.3 This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner after a serious complaint, relevant legal or guidance change, change of operating model or site, commissioner requirement or evidence that the procedure is inaccessible or ineffective.

21. Reference framework

External framework and guidance

- Department for Education - Non-school alternative provision: voluntary national standards
- Department for Education - Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures (adopted as relevant good practice)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Equality Act 2010 and current services guidance
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Information Commissioner’s Office - data-protection complaint guidance
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman - education and alternative provision complaint information
- Ofsted and Department for Education official complaint and unregistered-school reporting routes

External guidance and contact routes checked 20 July 2026. Current official sources take precedence if a route or requirement changes.