

Cardiff City Football Club

Academy Complaints

Policy and Procedure

Version 1.4

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1. Policy Statement

Cardiff City Football Club welcomes feedback from players, parents and carers, and all stakeholders, in order to improve the overall experience in every area of our Academy's activities.

This policy and procedure is designed to provide a clear and transparent guidance on the way in which the Academy receive and handle complaints and positive feedback, relating to its provision, services, partners, and employees.

The policy supports our overarching commitment to excellence, fairness, transparency, and continuous improvement; however, we recognise that, on occasion, the provision may not meet an individual's requirements or expectations.

All complaints will be:

- Treated seriously and in an open manner.
- Acknowledged within **3 working days** unless extenuating circumstances exist.
- Investigated proportionately.
- Resolved, wherever it is reasonably practicable, within **13 working weeks**.
- Used as feedback to improve the service that the Academy offers.
- Investigated with a reassurance that no complainant bringing a complaint under this procedure will be treated less favourably by any member of staff. If there is evidence of the contrary, the staff member may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

2. Scope

The policy applies to all Academy employees including volunteers, but does not replace procedures for staff grievances, disciplinary action, or safeguarding 'Children' or 'Adults at Risk.' The specific procedures relating to those areas will be used where appropriate.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 All **Academy Staff** have a responsibility for receiving complaints, treating them seriously and dealing with them promptly and courteously, in accordance with the procedure set out below.

3.2 **Academy Operations Manager** will be responsible for assessing the nature and extent of each specific complaint and preparing an appropriate response to the complainant within the agreed timescale. A proportionate plan of action will be agreed with the Academy Manager and implemented.

3.3 **Senior Managers (including the Academy Manager)** have a responsibility for resolving a complaint, and leading or contributing to an investigation into a complaint when this is considered appropriate.

3.4 The **Chief Executive Officer** is responsible for resolving complaints which have not been resolved during the previous two stages. The decision made by the Chief Executive is final.

3.5 The **Governing Board** is responsible for ensuring that the complaints policy and procedure are operating effectively and may become directly involved if a complaint is directed against the Chief Executive Officer.

3.6 The **English Football League (EFL)** will receive any referral from the Academy in relation to any matter that remains unresolved following the internal processes (*Stages One to Four*)

4. Legislation and Statutory Guidance

All complaints handled by the Club's Academy will be considered in accordance with the following legislation and statutory regulations:

- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- EFL Youth Development Rules

5. Complaint Handling Process

Cardiff City Football Club's Academy defines a complaint as:

“an expression of dissatisfaction made to the company, relating to its products or services, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response is explicitly or implicitly, expected.”

5.1 Any person or organisation ('the complainant'), who is dissatisfied with Academy service or facilities, or the complaints handling process itself, may contact the Cardiff City Academy to complain.

5.2 Where possible, complaints should be made in writing to ensure the details of the complaint are clear and concise.

5.3 When making a complaint, the complainant should explain their concern and/or experience, in as much detail as possible, including whether any action has been taken prior to making a formal complaint.

5.4 Complaints must be made no later than:

- Six months after the date on which the matter, subject of the complaint, occurred, or
- Six months after the date on which the complaint came to the notice of the complainant.

If there are extenuating circumstances which impact on this set of time scales and it is still possible and proportionate to investigate the complaint, the Academy will make the appropriate consideration.

Stage One

The Academy aim for all complaints to resolved informally wherever possible and an action plan is formulated and agreed by all parties.

Complaints can be made via the following methods:

- In person directly to a member of Academy staff
- By telephone using Tel: 03333 11 1927
- By email directly into the Academy: academy@cardiffcityfc.co.uk
- By post: Cardiff City Academy, Mendip Road, Llanrumney, Cardiff CF3 4TG

A record of the complaint should be made by the person receiving the complaint.

Stage Two

All correspondence received will be assessed by the Academy Operations Manager as to its nature and extent, and an appropriate response will be communicated within **three working days** of receipt, unless extenuating circumstances exist. If a complaint requires additional investigation, the reporting person will be informed.

Where the complaint involves a member of Academy staff, specific details of any action taken may not be made available for reasons of confidentiality. This matter will also be referred to the Head of Human Resources.

If the complaint requires further investigation, an appropriate member of staff will be allocated that responsibility. That person will keep the complainant updated and will communicate an anticipated timescale for the response to be provided.

If the complaint involves a senior Academy member of staff, it may be appropriate for the Club to appoint an appropriate member of the Senior Management Team to investigate the complaint.

Stage Three

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the allocated staff member's response, the complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate member of the Club's Senior Management Team to resolve. They will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and respond to the complainant within **two working weeks** and a final reply will be completed within **eight working weeks** to allow time for any further information gathering and investigations to be undertaken.

Stage Four

If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the response, then the matter will be referred to the Club's Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive will respond within three weeks. The Chief Executive's decision is final.

Complaints against the Chief Executive Officer

Complaints against the Chief Executive Officer should be addressed in writing to the Chair of Board of Directors at:

Cardiff City Football Club
Cardiff City Stadium
Leckwith
Cardiff
CF11 8AZ

The complaints procedure should be finalised in no more than **13 working weeks** unless there are exceptional circumstances, in which case the complainant will be kept informed of progress.

External Referral - EFL

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with any decision or outcome reached, they can refer the matter to the English Football League using the following email addresses:

- EFL Enquiries – enquiries@efl.com
- EFL Youth Development – YouthDevelopment@efl.com

6. Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Reason	Comment
V1.0	16/02/2024	Rob Cronick	PGAAC Audit 2023/2024	For review annually
V1.1	16/08/2024	Rob Cronick	Removal of years for future proof of doc	To be reviewed annually
V1.2	27/10/2025	Rob Cronick	Annual Review	NA
V1.3	24/08/2026	Rob Cronick	Annual Review	NA

Appendix

Anonymous Complaints

It is exceedingly difficult to investigate anonymous complaints as there will always be information that cannot be gathered or clarified.

All written anonymous complaints will be recorded. The relevant manager will decide on the level of investigation into the complaint and the outcome will be recorded on file.

Third Party Reporting

It is expected complaints to be made by the person concerned. However, the Academy will always consider a complaint made by a parent or advocate as it is acknowledged that there are many reasons (including imbalances of power) that hinder people from making a complaint themselves.

Vexatious Complainants

Cardiff City Academy may reject a complaint at any time if, in the reviewer's opinion, the complaint is considered "vexatious."

A frivolous or vexatious complaint can be characterised in a number of ways:

- Complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious (Repetitious would include, for example, that after appropriated procedures have been followed and a full and final judgement has been provided and the complainant continues to pursue the complaint)
- Insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- Insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason:
- Complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance:
- Demands for redress which lack any serious purpose or value:

The Academy will consider all the circumstances of the case and if a final judgement has already been confirmed as part of the complaint's procedure.

Our main consideration will be the issues raised in the complaint however consideration will be given to the behaviour of the complainant bringing the complaint if it is felt that their behaviour has become unacceptable.

If we decide that a complainant's complaint is vexatious, we will write to the complainant explaining that we are terminating our consideration of the complaint or further correspondence on the issue in line with the Club's process for dealing with unacceptable behaviour from complainants. We will give reasons for our decision, and we will send a copy of our letter to the EFL.

Any complainant who is unhappy with the Club/Academy terminating consideration of a complaint due to unacceptable behaviour/vexatious reason has the right to submit a complaint to the EFL as detailed in this policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Academy will maintain a confidential record of all complaints, appeals and outcomes. The Academy will consider the learning from issues raised to assess what action, if any, would create a more positive experience and environment for those involved in participating in or providing its activities and to promote a safer environment. Themes and issues arising during each season will be collated to inform planning and priorities for the following season.