SS Peter & Paul
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Approved by	**Full Governing Body**
Date approved	**September 2026**
Last reviewed on	**October 2026**
Next review due by	**September 2027**
Policy lead	**Headteacher**
Version	**2.0 (supersedes version 1.0, September 2026)**

‘Learning Together, Achieving Together in Christ’

Version control

Version	Date	Summary of changes	Approved
1.0	September 2026	Complaints procedure with informal stage, Stage 1 (Headteacher) and Stage 2 (Complaints Appeal Panel).	FGB
2.0	October 2026	Moved to the school policy template and aligned with the DfE's best practice guidance for school complaints procedures. Added: the list of matters dealt with under other procedures, a time limit for raising complaints, complaints received in school holidays, complaints about governors and the whole Governing Body, anonymous complaints, recordings, unreasonable behaviour and serial complaints, record keeping, and the role of the Archdiocese of Southwark. Removed secondary-school references and corrected the name of the Archdiocese and the Secretary of State route. The stages and timescales are unchanged.	**[CONFIRM: FGB approval date]**

Contents

1. Our Approach
2. Introduction and Scope
3. The Informal Stage
4. Stage 1: Formal Complaint to the Headteacher
5. Stage 2: Consideration by a Complaints Appeal Panel
6. Next Steps
7. Unreasonable Behaviour and Serial Complaints
8. Recording
9. Record Keeping and Confidentiality
10. Monitoring and Review

Annex A – Complaint Forms

Annex B – Example Letter: Acknowledgement of a Stage 2 Request

1. Our Approach

Our Complaints Policy and Procedure reflects our school's Mission Statement and Aims.

> *Mission statement: "Learning Together, Achieving Together in Christ"*

- We welcome everyone into our loving and caring school, where we respect each other and ourselves.
- We inspire and motivate each other to achieve and grow using the talents given to us by God.
- We learn by questioning and challenging ourselves to become the best we can be.
- We celebrate the diversity within our community knowing that we all belong to God's family.
- We say sorry for our mistakes and forgive each other.
- We challenge everybody to be actively involved in our community.
- We pray together and celebrate the love of Christ.

We value feedback from parents and the community and want to resolve concerns quickly, fairly and as close to the classroom as possible.

2. Introduction and Scope

The Governing Body must have, and publish, a procedure for dealing with complaints about the school and about any facilities or services it provides (section 29 of the Education Act 2002).

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services the school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply. The procedure refers to this person as "the complainant".

2.1 Concerns and complaints

- A **concern** is an expression of worry or doubt about an issue that matters to the person raising it, where reassurance is sought. Most concerns are resolved quickly and informally by the person to whom they are raised, such as the class teacher or phase leader.
- A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action. If a concern cannot be resolved informally, it may become a formal complaint.

Complainants should feel able to raise concerns with staff without formality, in person, by telephone or in writing. The school takes all concerns seriously and acts promptly. A complaint can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the operation and management of this procedure, and may nominate another member of staff to co-ordinate it.

2.2 Matters dealt with under other procedures

The following are not dealt with under this procedure, because they have their own statutory or separate processes:

Matter	Where to go
Admissions	Appeals are made to an independent appeal panel (see the Admissions Policy). Complaints about the admissions process may be made to the Governing Body as admission authority.
Exclusions	Governors' review and independent review panel processes, under the DfE suspension and exclusion guidance.
Statutory assessments and EHC plans for SEND	Concerns go to the London Borough of Merton. Appeals go to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability).
Safeguarding matters	These are dealt with under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. If a complaint suggests a child may be at risk of significant harm, it is referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and may be referred to children's social care or the police without further notice. Any investigation by those agencies may delay or replace the school's own investigation.
Whistleblowing	The school's Whistleblowing Policy. Staff may also contact the DfE or the NSPCC whistleblowing advice line.
Staff grievances and disciplinary matters	The school's HR policies. Complainants are told if action has been taken in relation to a member of staff, but not the detail, which is confidential.
Services provided by other organisations on the school site	The complaint is passed to that provider's own procedure.
National Curriculum content	The DfE.
Data protection	The data protection complaints process in the Data Protection Policy, and then the Information Commission.

2.3 Time limit

Complaints should be raised as soon as possible, and normally within three months of the incident, or of the last incident where there is a series. The school will consider complaints made outside this time only if there are exceptional circumstances.

2.4 Complaints received during school holidays

Complaints received outside term time are treated as received on the first school day after the holiday.

2.5 Anonymous complaints

The school does not normally investigate anonymous complaints. The Headteacher or Chair of Governors decides whether a complaint warrants investigation, for example where it raises a safeguarding concern.

2.6 Resolving complaints

At each stage, the school considers how a complaint can best be resolved. This may include an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or part, an explanation, an apology, an assurance that steps are being taken to prevent a recurrence, a review of policies, or other appropriate action.

The school does not pay financial compensation in response to a complaint, but may spend money on a relevant educational purpose.

2.7 Accessibility

The school makes reasonable adjustments so that the procedure is accessible, for example by accepting complaints orally, providing information in other formats, or allowing a complainant to bring someone to support them.

3. The Informal Stage

The complainant has the opportunity to discuss their concern with the appropriate member of staff. An appointment may need to be made.

- The complainant may bring a friend or supporter to any discussion.
- The member of staff makes sure the complainant is clear about any action or monitoring that has been agreed.
- This stage is completed quickly and concluded in writing, with appropriate detail.
- Where no satisfactory solution is found, the member of staff explains that the complainant may make a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher, using the Stage 1 form in Annex A or a letter that addresses the same questions.

4. Stage 1: Formal Complaint to the Headteacher

1. The Headteacher acknowledges the complaint in writing within five school days of receiving it. In some cases the Headteacher will already have been involved; in others this will be their first involvement.
2. The Headteacher may meet the complainant to clarify the complaint and what outcome they are seeking.
3. If the complaint is about a member of staff, the Headteacher speaks to that member of staff.
4. If necessary, the Headteacher interviews witnesses and takes statements.
5. The Headteacher keeps reasonable written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documents.
6. Once the facts are established, the Headteacher writes to the complainant. They may meet the complainant to discuss the outcome before confirming it in writing.
7. The written response includes a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it, and, where appropriate, what action the school will take to resolve the complaint.
8. Stage 1 is completed within 15 school days. Where a complaint is complex and this is not possible, the Headteacher writes to the complainant with a revised target date.
9. The response explains that, if the complainant is not satisfied, they may ask for the complaint to be considered at Stage 2 by writing to the Chair of Governors, via the clerk at the school address, within 15 school days of receiving the outcome letter. The letter gives the clerk's contact details.

4.1 Complaints about the Headteacher

If a complaint is wholly or mainly about the Headteacher, Stage 1 is carried out by the Chair of Governors. The Chair invites the Headteacher to respond in writing within 10 school days, and sends a copy of the response to the complainant, who is asked to say within five school days

whether they are satisfied. If they are not, the complaint moves to Stage 2, and the Chair does not sit on the panel.

4.2 Complaints about governors

- A complaint about a member of the Governing Body, or the clerk, is considered at Stage 1 by the Chair of Governors.
- A complaint about the Chair of Governors, or about the Chair and Vice-Chair together, is considered at Stage 1 by the Vice-Chair or another governor with no prior involvement. If the complaint is about the Chair and Vice-Chair, or several governors, the Governing Body may ask an independent investigator, for example arranged through the London Borough of Merton or the Archdiocese of Southwark, to carry out Stage 1, and Stage 2 is heard by governors from another school.
- A complaint about the whole Governing Body is referred to the clerk, who informs the Chair. It is considered by an independent investigator and a panel of independent governors arranged through the local authority or the Archdiocese.

5. Stage 2: Consideration by a Complaints Appeal Panel

1. If the complainant asks for Stage 2, the clerk, on behalf of the Chair, acknowledges the request within five school days. The acknowledgement and the complaint form are copied to the Headteacher. (A standard letter is in Annex B.)
2. The Headteacher makes the Stage 1 investigation and response available to the clerk and the panel. Where the complaint was about the Headteacher, the Chair decides how the complaint is investigated. Where the facts are clearly established, the matter may go straight to the panel.
3. The complaint is heard by a Complaints Appeal Panel of three governors who have had no prior involvement with the complaint. Where possible, the panel is a cross-section of the categories of governor and is sensitive to issues of race, sex and religious affiliation.
4. The Headteacher does not sit on the panel. If the Chair of Governors has had any prior involvement, the Chair does not sit on the panel.
5. The panel considers the complaint afresh, on the basis of the written evidence and a hearing with both parties. It reconsiders the issues raised in the original complaint, and does not confine itself to procedural issues.
6. The clerk supports the panel by administering the procedure, giving independent advice on procedure, making sure the relevant facts are established, minuting the meeting and drafting the decision letter.
7. The clerk writes to the complainant to explain how the review will be conducted, with a copy to the Headteacher, and confirms the date of the meeting with the panel members.
8. The complainant and the Headteacher are invited to attend. The meeting is arranged at a time convenient to both, within reason. The invitation explains that the complainant may be accompanied by a friend or representative, how the meeting will be conducted, and that they may submit further written evidence. Legal representation is not normally necessary.
9. The Headteacher is invited to prepare a written report for the panel.
10. All relevant correspondence is circulated to the panel, the complainant and the Headteacher at least five school days before the meeting. New complaints raised at this stage are not considered; they must go through Stage 1.

11. If either party wishes to call witnesses, the agreement of the panel chair is obtained in advance.
12. The panel chair makes sure the meeting is properly conducted. Proceedings are kept as informal as possible.
13. The aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. At the end, the panel must reach a written finding upholding the complaint in whole or in part, or not upholding it.
14. If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, the meeting may be adjourned in the interest of natural justice, so that the other party can respond. Late evidence is not accepted without good reason.
15. The meeting allows for:
    a) the complainant to explain the complaint, and the Headteacher to explain the school's position;
    b) the Headteacher to question the complainant, and the complainant to question the Headteacher;
    c) the panel to question both parties;
    d) witnesses, if agreed by the panel chair, with all parties able to question them;
    e) a final statement by the complainant and the Headteacher.
16. The panel chair explains that the panel will now consider its decision and that a written response will be sent to both parties as soon as possible. The complainant, the Headteacher and any witnesses then leave.
17. The panel considers all the evidence and reaches a unanimous or majority decision. Where appropriate, it decides on action to resolve the complaint and/or recommends changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar problems.
18. As at Stage 1, the panel does not award financial compensation, but may recommend spending on an appropriate educational purpose.
19. The clerk sends a written statement of the decision, with reasons, to the complainant and the Headteacher, and, where relevant, to the person complained about. The letter explains that the complainant may contact the Department for Education if they believe the school has not followed its procedure or has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.
20. Stage 2 is completed within 15 school days of the request. For complex complaints this may not be possible, and the panel chair writes to the complainant and the Headteacher with a revised target date.

6. Next Steps

Stage 2 is the final stage of the school's procedure.

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with this published procedure, or acted unlawfully or unreasonably in exercising its duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education's School Complaints Unit after completing Stage 2. The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of the complaint. Information is available at gov.uk/complain-about-school.

As the school's trustee, the Archdiocese of Southwark may be able to advise on matters relating to the school's Catholic character, including religious education and collective worship. Complaints about whole-school issues can also be raised with Ofsted, which does not investigate individual complaints.

7. Unreasonable Behaviour and Serial Complaints

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. We do not normally limit contact with complainants. However, we do not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour, and we will take action to protect them. Behaviour may be unreasonable if it is abusive, offensive or threatening, if the complainant refuses to co-operate with the procedure, or if they repeatedly make the same complaint after the procedure has been completed.

If a complainant tries to reopen the same issue after all stages have been followed, the Chair of Governors may write to tell them that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed. Further correspondence on the same issue may be acknowledged without a response. Where behaviour is unreasonable, the school may restrict contact to a single point of contact or a single method, and in serious cases may seek legal advice or bar a person from the premises.

8. Recording

Complainants should not make audio or video recordings of meetings or conversations without the consent of everyone present. Covert recordings are not considered as evidence unless they are relevant and their use has been agreed.

9. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

The school keeps a written record of all formal complaints, at Stage 1 and Stage 2, including whether they were resolved and any action taken. Records are kept securely and confidentially in line with the Data Protection Policy and retention schedule, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection asks to see them. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are confidential.

The Governing Body reviews the number and nature of complaints, without identifying individuals, to identify any trends and improve the school's practice.

10. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher and approved by the Full Governing Body. It is published on the school website and available on request from the school office.

Annex A – Complaint Forms

Stage 1 complaint form

If you have tried unsuccessfully to resolve your concern informally and wish to make a formal complaint, please complete this form and send it to the Headteacher at the school office. If your complaint is about the Headteacher, please send it to the Chair of Governors, via the clerk at the school address.

Your name	
Address	
Telephone (home / daytime / mobile)	
Email	
Name of child and class (if relevant)	
What is your complaint about?	
When did you discuss your concern, and with whom?	
What was the result of that discussion?	
What would you like the outcome to be?	
Any supporting documents attached?	
Signed	
Date	

Stage 2 request form

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 and wish your complaint to be considered by the Complaints Appeal Panel, please complete this form and send it, within 15 school days of receiving the Stage 1 outcome, to the Chair of Governors via the clerk at the school address.

Your name	
Address	
Telephone (home / daytime / mobile)	
Email	
Name of child and class (if relevant)	
What is your complaint about?	

When was your complaint considered at Stage 1?	
Why are you not satisfied with the Stage 1 outcome?	
What would you like the outcome of the panel hearing to be?	
Signed	
Date	

Annex B – Example Letter: Acknowledgement of a Stage 2 Request

Dear [name],

Complaint regarding [subject]

Thank you for your letter dated [date] setting out why you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint about [subject].

I am writing to let you know that a Complaints Appeal Panel (CAP) will consider your complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the school's Complaints Policy and Procedure, a copy of which is enclosed. The clerk will write to you to explain how the panel will consider your complaint and to arrange a date for the meeting.

Or, for complaints about the Headteacher:

I have received your complaint about the Headteacher of SS Peter & Paul Catholic Primary School, and have forwarded a copy to the Headteacher with a request that they respond within 10 school days to the issues you have raised. I will send you a copy of the Headteacher's response as soon as possible. If you are not satisfied with the response, I will arrange for a Complaints Appeal Panel to consider your complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the procedure.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of Governors

cc: Headteacher; Clerk to the Governing Body. Enclosed: Complaints Policy and Procedure.