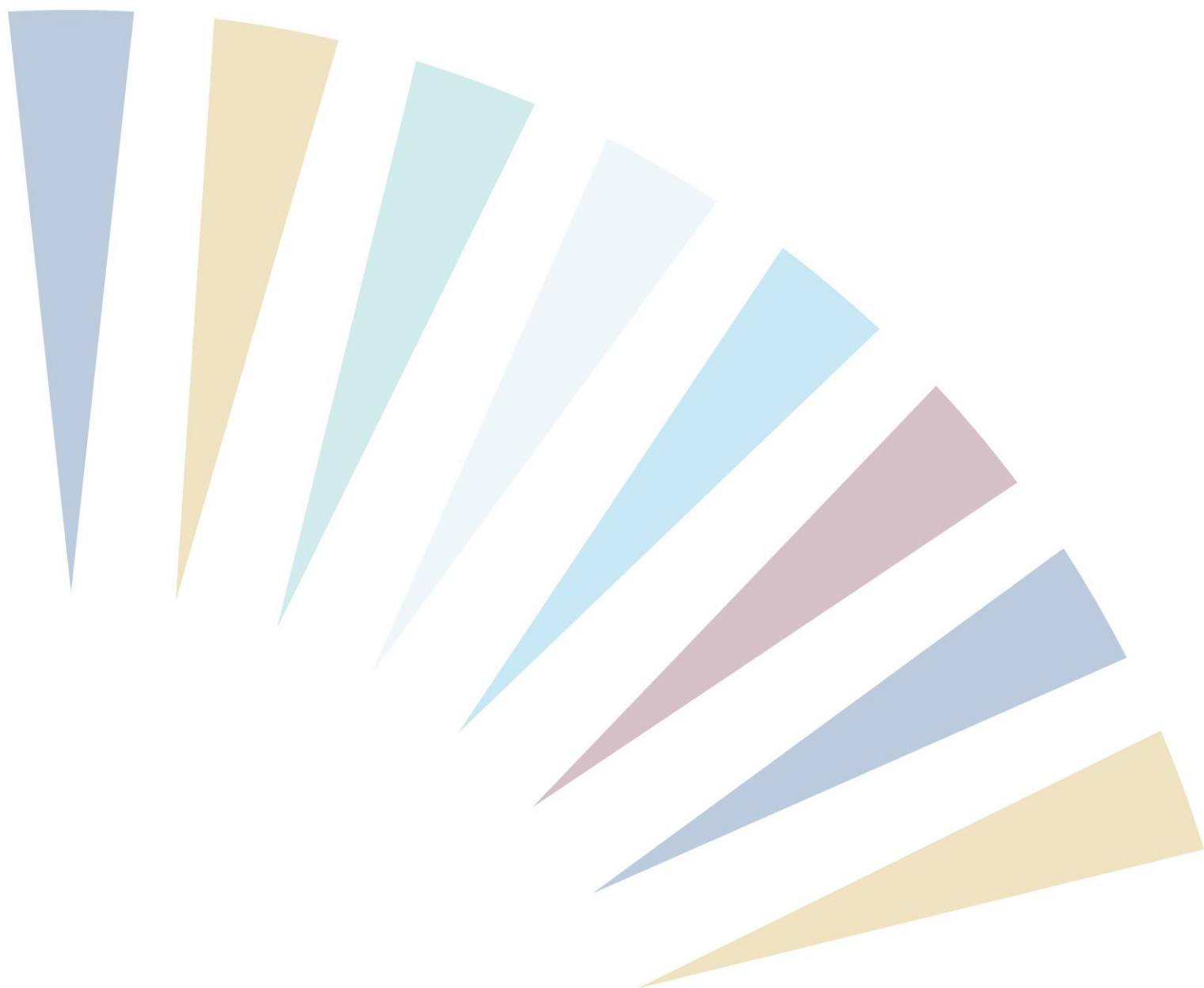




We are His body, living and learning as one.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE



Document Record	
Policy title	Complaints Procedure
Purpose of policy	To meet our statutory obligations when responding to complaints and ensure that a complaint by an individual is managed efficiently at the appropriate stage and resolved in a timely manner. This procedure sets out a framework to establish effective management of complaints taking into account the requirements of the Trust to deliver an effective education to its pupils.
Author	Strategic HR Officer
Approved by	FRRAC
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1. Introduction

- i. Corpus Christi Catholic Academy Trust (referred to hereafter as the Trust) has developed a number of key policies and procedures to ensure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in relation to respect, objectivity and belief in the dignity of the individual become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies and procedures are reviewed regularly in this regard.
- ii. The distinctiveness of a Catholic school is lived out through the care and respect shown for each other. All staff are principally responsible for a Catholic school's ability to put into effect its ethos, aims and projects.
- iii. The Trust will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and is committed to ensuring that throughout the complaints process, no individual is disadvantaged or discriminated against in the application of this procedure because of the protected characteristics. These are age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy, maternity and marriage or civil partnership.
- iv. If the Trust becomes aware that the complainant has a disability at any stage of this process, then reasonable adjustments will be considered to ensure that the complainant is not disadvantaged by this process. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.
- v. The Trust supports the creation of a safer culture to ensure the schools are an environment where everyone is safe and happy by reinforcing the safeguarding and well-being of children and young people in its care.
- vi. The Trust will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the school where appropriate and determine whether they can feed into the school improvement evaluation process.
- vii. The Trust will endeavour to consider and resolve complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible and without the need to escalate to more formal procedures. However, where initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and a resolution is not achieved and the person raising the complaint remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further, the formal part of the procedure will be invoked.
- viii. The Trust does not expect its employees to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect its employees from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

2. Scope of the procedure

- i. This procedure applies to all schools within the Trust.
- ii. As the complaints procedure is based upon [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), it only applies to complaints from parents/carers of pupils at the school, regarding their child. As public bodies, the Secretary of State for Education expects schools to handle complaints from people who are not parents of children at the school respectfully and expediently, although they are not obliged to follow the complaints procedure in order to do so.

- iii. This complaints procedure is intended primarily for parents and carers of pupils attending schools within the Trust. The Trust Board and school leadership recognise that concerns or complaints may occasionally be raised by individuals who are not parents or carers. Such matters will be considered on their merits; however, the school reserves the right to determine whether, and to what extent, the formal stages of this complaints procedure will be applied. In such cases, the school may respond through an alternative process considered appropriate to the circumstances.
- iv. For the avoidance of doubt, this procedure should not be used by employees of the Trust, as separate procedures exist for employees to raise concerns, such as the Grievance Policy and Dignity at Work Policy.
- v. Any data protection complaints will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Policy, as a separate process is in place for managing these complaints.
- vi. Arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) about the school's support are within the scope of this procedure and each school's SEN Policy. Such complaints should first be made to the class teacher, Social, Emotional and Mental Health Leader and Inclusion Manager, SENDCO or Headteacher as appropriate, and they will then be referred to this procedure. The school's SEND policy and information report includes information about the rights of parents of pupils with disabilities who believe that our school has discriminated against their child.
- vii. This procedure is compliant with 'The Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 7 *'Manner in which complaints are handled'*. This requirement states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the school.
- viii. This procedure is in accordance with the Department for Education's (DfE) Best Practice Guidance for Academies Complaints Procedures.
- ix. This procedure is in accordance with the Trust's Funding Agreement and Articles of Association.
- x. This procedure takes into account the Employment Rights Act 1996, the Equality Act 2010, the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679 EU) and the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988.
- xi. Unless indicated otherwise, all references to "Governing Body" apply to a school's Local Governing Body or Interim Management Board.

3. Principles

- i. This procedure is designed to meet statutory obligations when responding to complaints and ensure that a complaint by an individual is managed efficiently at the appropriate stage and resolved in a timely manner.
- ii. The timescales in this procedure may be amended by mutual agreement. All parties will ensure however, that meetings, and any subsequent panel hearing, progress as quickly as is reasonably possible for the benefit of all parties concerned. Please refer to Paragraph 13 for timescales.

- iii. Anonymous complaints will not normally be considered. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.
- iv. Complaints not in scope of the procedure will not be considered, examples of which can be found at Appendix A.
- v. Advice on how to deal with serial, persistent and unreasonable complaints can be found at Appendix B, and examples of unreasonable complaints in Appendix C.
- vi. A model complaints form can be found at Appendix D.
- vii. Should a complaint be referred to a Stage 3 panel hearing, the proceedings of the hearing can be found at Appendix E.
- viii. Electronically recording a conversation or meeting without the prior informed consent of all participants is inappropriate and not allowed. The school reserves the right to refuse permission for a complainant to use a recording that has been obtained covertly in the complaints process, and in some cases, this may result in the complaint being disregarded.
- ix. A written record of the complaint and the date on which it was received will be kept at all stages and, if appropriate, a record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Please refer to paragraph 16 for record retention.

4. Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

- i. The school will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school will keep a record of the complaint and make this available to Ofsted on request. See paragraph 15 on retention of records.
- ii. Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that the school is not meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by calling 0300 123 4666, or by emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. An online contact form is also available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>.
- iii. The school will notify parents and carers if it becomes aware that the school is to be inspected by Ofsted. The Trust will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

5. Roles and responsibilities

- i. The Trust has delegated the overall responsibility for the effective operation of this procedure to the school's Local Governing Body or Headteacher as appropriate, in accordance with the nature of the complaint.
- ii. All stakeholders involved in a complaint process should comply with the terms of this procedure.
- iii. The Trust will:
 - Ensure that each school or governing body (depending on the nature and stage of the complaint) manages the complaint process in accordance with this procedure.

- iv. The Local Governing Body will:
 - Be responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with this procedure.
- v. The Headteacher will:
 - Ensure that the school responds and deals with complaints under the operation of this procedure.
- vi. The Complainant will:
 - Explain their complaint in full as early as possible;
 - Co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint;
 - Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint;
 - Ask for assistance as needed;
 - Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect;
 - Refrain from publishing the details of their complaint on social media;
 - Respect confidentiality
- vii. The Investigator will:
 - Seek to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - Sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - Interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
 - analysing information
 - Liaise with the complainant and the complaints coordinator (where provided) as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
 - Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
 - Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting;
 - Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any Stage 3 panel hearing;
 - Be mindful of the timescales to respond;
 - Be impartial and non-adversarial and may be involved in Stages 1 and 2 of this procedure;
 - Identify solutions and recommend courses of action to resolve problems.
- viii. The Panel Clerk will:
 - Be the point of contact for the complainant for the panel hearing;

- Facilitate a hearing, set the date, time and venue, ensuring that, wherever possible, the dates are convenient to all parties;
 - Collate any written material and circulate the relevant papers and evidence to all parties in advance of the panel hearing;
 - Liaise with the complainant, staff members, the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and panel hearing members to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure.
- ix. The Panel Hearing Chair will ensure that:
- Both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting;
 - The meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy;
 - Complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease;
 - The remit of the panel is explained to the complainant;
 - Written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the Data Protection Act 2018 or the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR);
 - If a new issue arises, whilst it does not necessarily need to be considered, it might be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting;
 - Both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself;
 - The issues are addressed;
 - Key findings of fact are made;
 - The panel is open-minded and acts independently;
 - No member of the panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
 - The meeting is minuted;
 - They liaise with the Clerk (and complaints coordinator, if the school has one).
- x. The Panel Hearing members will be aware that:
- The meeting must be independent and impartial and should be seen to be so. No governor/trustee may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it;
 - The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations;

- Many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child;
- Where the complainant is the parent of a child in the school, the panel should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child needs to attend. However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child to attend a part of the meeting that the panel considers is not in the child's best interests;
- The welfare of the child is paramount.

6. The difference between a concern and a complaint

- i. A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.
- ii. A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.
- iii. It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. The school and Trust take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.
- iv. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, the school will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.
- v. The Trust understands however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the school will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

7. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

- i. A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.
- ii. For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure at Appendix D. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation to help you, for example Citizens Advice.
- iii. All formal complaints should be addressed to the appropriate person and should be marked Private and Confidential:
 - Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance to the Headteacher, via the school office.
 - Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. The complaint will be investigated by a suitably skilled and impartial member of the Governing Body.
 - Complaints about any individual governor should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. The complaint will be investigated by a suitably skilled and impartial member of the Governing Body.
 - Complaints about the Chair or Vice Chair of Governors should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body, via the school office. The complaint will be investigated by a suitably skilled and impartial member of the Governing Body or an independent investigator appointed by the Governing Body, Trust or Diocese.
 - Complaints made jointly against the Chair and Vice Chair should be addressed to the CEO of the Trust, via the Trust office. The complaint will be investigated by the CEO or a suitably skilled and impartial investigator appointed by the Governing Body, Trust or Diocese.
 - Complaints about the entire or majority of the governing body should be addressed to the CEO of the Trust, via the Trust office. The complaint will be investigated by the CEO or a suitably skilled and impartial investigator appointed by the Trust or Diocese.
 - Complaints made against a member of the Trust's Central Team should be addressed to the CEO, via the Trust office. The complaint will be investigated by the CEO or a suitably skilled person appointed by the CEO.
 - Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a trustee of the Trust should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees, via the Trust office. The complaint will be investigated by the Chair of Trustees or a suitably skilled and impartial investigator appointed by the Chair of Trustees.
- iv. Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

8. Resolving complaints

- i. At each stage of the procedure, it is always the school's intention to resolve the concern or complaint as quickly and effectively as possible.
- ii. If appropriate, the school will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, the school may offer one or more of the following:
 - an explanation
 - an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
 - an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
 - an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
 - an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
 - an apology

9. Stages of the procedure

- i. The Trust has determined that there are three stages in this procedure. This procedure intends to try to deal with the complaint, to the satisfaction of the complainant, at the earliest possible stage. If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, the complainant can escalate it to the formal stage. If the complaint cannot be subsequently resolved at the formal stage, it can then be escalated to a panel hearing.
- ii. At each stage of the complaints procedure, the investigator responsible will consider:
 - What has happened;
 - Who was involved;
 - What the complainant feels would put things right; and
 - How the complaint may be resolved.
- iii. In considering how a complaint may be resolved, the investigator will give due regard to the seriousness of the complaint.

10. Stage 1 Informal Resolution

- i. It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.
- ii. Concerns should be raised with the class teacher, year head, subject head or Headteacher.
- iii. The quickest response at the informal stage will usually be for the school to contact the complainant by telephone, rather than replying by email or in writing, either to attempt to resolve the matter quickly over the phone or to arrange a meeting.

- iv. If the concern cannot be resolved over the phone, a meeting will be held with the complainant with the intention of providing an informal resolution to the concern or complaint. An appropriate member of staff such as a class teacher, member of SLT, SENCO or Deputy Headteacher may also attend the meeting as appropriate.
- v. If the matter requires further investigation or the person investigating needs to establish the facts, they may meet or call the complainant again to discuss or resolve the matter directly.
- vi. At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. This may include an explanation of the decision and the reasons for it, and/or an explanation of what the school will do to resolve the issue.
- vii. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

11. Stage 2 Formal Resolution

- i. The formal complaint is put in writing to the Headteacher or other appropriate person, preferably using the form at Appendix D. The complainant should provide details such as:
 - a. their contact details;
 - b. relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events alongside copies of any relevant documents;
 - c. what action, if any, they have already taken to try to resolve the complaint; and
 - d. what they feel would resolve the complaint at this stage.
- ii. The school will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.
- iii. The Headteacher or other appropriate person will offer the complainant an opportunity to meet with them to clarify concerns, seek a resolution and give the complainant an opportunity to provide additional information, ideally within 10 school days of the complaint being raised. The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team, but not the decision to be taken. In certain circumstances, or where it is considered appropriate to do so, the school reserves the right to appoint an independent investigator to undertake the investigation on its behalf. The final decision in relation to the complaint will remain with the Headteacher (or other appropriate decision-maker in accordance with this procedure).
- iv. The complainant may be accompanied at the meeting and should inform the school of their chosen companion and their relationship to them in advance of the meeting. In certain circumstances, the school may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting, for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the school will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange an alternative companion.

- v. It is not generally appropriate for children to be included in formal complaint meetings, as this environment can be highly distressing to them and risks traumatising the child. Whilst the investigator is required to listen to the child's perspective, this should be gathered separately either before or after the formal meeting to protect the child's wellbeing. Alternatively, a child can submit a written account.
- vi. During the investigation, the Headteacher (or investigator) will, if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- vii. Once the facts of the complaint have been established and investigated, the complainant will be provided with a written response (outcome letter), including a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it no later than 20 school days after the date of the meeting to discuss the matter. Where appropriate, an explanation of what the school will do to resolve the issue will be included in the letter.
- viii. If no further communication is received from the complainant within 10 school days of receipt of the outcome letter, it will be deemed that the complaint is closed. However, if the complainant is dissatisfied with the result at Stage 2, they should notify the Chair of Governors or other appropriate person in writing within 10 school days of receiving the outcome letter.

12. Stage 3 Panel Hearing

- i. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a panel hearing consisting of at least three people (typically non-staff governors or other appropriate suitably skilled individuals from within the Trust) who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school and will not be a director of the Trust Board. The independent person will normally be a governor from another school or Trust, a local authority representative, or another suitably experienced person. In the exceptional event that there are insufficient numbers of governors available to participate in a panel, the Trust may appoint associate members solely to participate in the panel, provided they meet the requirements for independence and have had no prior involvement in the complaint.
- ii. This is the final stage of the Trust's complaints procedure.
- iii. The purpose of the panel hearing is to review the complaint and the Stage 2 outcome. The panel will consider whether the complaint was handled appropriately and whether the conclusions reached were reasonable based on the evidence.
- iv. The panel is not required to re-investigate the complaint in full, but it may consider the facts of the case, review evidence presented, and reach its own findings where appropriate, including whether the procedure was followed correctly.
- v. The complaint must be submitted in writing to the Chair of the Governing Body, or other appropriate person as identified in the Stage 2 outcome letter,

within 10 school days of receipt of that letter. The complainant should set out the details of the complaint, including why they remain dissatisfied with the outcome and/or how they believe the complaint has not been handled appropriately, and what outcome they are seeking.

- vi. The date the escalation is received will be recorded and will be acknowledged in writing within 5 school days.
- vii. Complaints made jointly against a Chair and Vice Chair, or the entire governing body, or the majority of the governing body, will be heard at Stage 3 by the Trust Board or a committee of independent governors, sourced from the Diocese if appropriate or necessary.
- viii. The hearing will normally be convened within 20 school days following escalation from Stage 2.
- ix. The complainant will be given reasonable notice of the date of the panel hearing, and convenient dates will be sought for all attendees. However, if the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk will set a date. The hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties. The panel will still ensure the complaint is considered fully and fairly.
- x. The complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support, such as a relative or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. Both the complainant and the respondent may invite witnesses. If a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.
- xi. If the complainant or Headteacher wishes to submit any documentation to be considered, the evidence will be initially sent to the Clerk, who will circulate the documentation to all parties, including the panel members, along with the order of proceedings at Appendix E. All written evidence must be received by the Clerk no later than 10 school days in advance of the hearing, except in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Chair/Clerk. The Clerk will ensure distribution of the evidence to all parties no later than 5 school days in advance of the hearing.
- xii. The panel will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.
- xiii. The review panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.
- xiv. The complainant will be notified of the outcome in writing as soon as possible, but in any event, within 5 school days of the panel meeting. This may be to the effect that:
 - There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld;
 - The evidence did not substantiate the concern, so the complaint cannot be upheld;

- The complaint was substantiated in part or full. A brief description should then be given of the remedial action being taken by the school as a consequence of the complaint;
 - The matter has been fully investigated and as a consequence, further confidential procedures are being pursued. Please note that details of the investigation or of any disciplinary procedures to be taken against a third party cannot be released.
 - The panel will also make recommendations where appropriate.
- xv. Where the panel needs to re-convene to give further consideration to the complaint, a final response will be given within 5 school days of the reconvened meeting.
- xvi. This represents the final stage of the Trust's complaints procedure.

13. Next steps

- i. If the complaint has been through all stages of the Trust's complaints procedure and the complainant remains dissatisfied, the complainant can refer the matter for consideration by the Department for Education (DfE) if they can evidence that the school:
- Does not have a complaints procedure;
 - Does not have a complaints procedure that complies with statutory regulations;
 - Did not provide a copy of its complaints procedure when requested;
 - Has not followed its published complaints procedure;
 - Has not allowed its complaints procedure to be completed;
 - Acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law

The DfE is not able to:

- Overturn the governing body's decision;
 - Re-investigate the original complaint;
 - Review the accuracy of minutes taken or documents provided;
 - Order the school to pay the complainant compensation;
 - Direct the school to discipline / exclude pupils;
 - Force the school to discipline / dismiss staff;
 - Instruct the school to apologise to the complainant.
- ii. They will consider whether the school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#)

- iii. Guidance about how the DfE handles complaints about academies can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy>
- iv. Information about how to escalate a complaint to the DfE can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe>

14. Timescales

- i. Every complaint shall receive fair and proper consideration and a timely response, but in order for the school to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made as soon as possible after an incident arises and within 3 months of an event. Exceptions may be considered where there are valid reasons for not making a complaint within this timeframe.
- ii. The school will endeavour to resolve any informal concerns or complaints within 10 working days of them being raised, except where they are raised during school holidays. In these cases, the school will consider the complaint to have been received on the first day after the holiday period and will strive to resolve the complaint as soon as possible thereafter.
- iii. Upon receipt of an informal complaint, the school will contact the complainant promptly by email or telephone. Upon receipt of a stage 2 or stage 3 written complaint, an acknowledgement will be sent in writing within 5 school days.
- iv. It is expected that most issues would be resolved at stage 1 of the procedure within 10 school days of receipt of the complaint; or within 30 school days at stage 2. Where the governing body is involved at stage 2, this may take longer due to governor availability.
- v. If the matter proceeds to stage 3 of the procedure, it is expected that the matter will be addressed within 25 school days of the matter being escalated from stage 2.
- vi. Should any stage require more time, then the school will inform the complainant of this in writing as soon as this is known, together with details of the new time limits and explain the reason for the delay.
- vii. Intervention of parallel investigations relevant to the complaint by the Police or other outside agencies may cause variation to the timescales.

15. Complaint Campaigns

- i. Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from the same complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond by publishing a single response on its website or sending a template response to all complainants.

16. Retention of records

- i. The school will retain records of all correspondence and statements relating to individual complaints at all stages of the process. These records will be kept confidential and be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher. They will only be viewed by those involved in investigating the complaint or the panel hearing. The exceptions to this are where:

- The Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them;
 - The complainant requests access to records through a freedom of information request (FOI), or through a subject access request (SAR) under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
 - The material must be made available during a school inspection.
 - There is an applicable lawful basis under the GDPR for extending the retention period.
- ii. A written record will be kept of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

Appendix A – Complaints outside of this procedure

This complaints procedure covers all complaints about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides with the exceptions listed below, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) • School re-organisation proposals • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation (Safeguarding)	Concerns should be raised directly with local authorities (LA). For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the LA). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.
• Exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions .
• Whistleblowing	Schools have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised directly with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to: WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD. The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.
• Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures	These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities.	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted directly.
• Complaints received from people who are not parents or carers of a child in a Trust school.	Contact the school for more information.

Appendix B – Serial, persistent and unreasonable complaints

The school will do its best to be helpful to people who contact them with a complaint. The purpose of this procedure is to identify all the facts that are pertinent to the complaint so that it can be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant. However, there may be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied.

In situations where the school recognises it has done everything it can in response to a complaint, it will weigh up whether it is a poor use of the school's time and resources to reply to repeated letters, emails or telephone calls making substantially the same points.

If the complainant then tries to reopen the same issue, the school will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent'. If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put strategies in place such as:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an e-mail address;
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact;
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf;
- Put any other appropriate strategy in place.

Once the school has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, they will inform the complainant through a hard copy letter. The school will stop responding in the following situations:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs;
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any);
- The complainant is contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time;
- The school has reason to believe the individual is contacting them with the intention of causing disruption, annoyance or inconvenience and has been advised of this belief by letter, email or telephone call;
- The complainant's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always harassing, prolific, defamatory, abusive or aggressive;
- The complainant contacts the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time;
- The complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff.

In certain circumstances and if a complainant persists to the point that the school considers it to constitute harassment, legal advice will be sought as to the next steps. In some cases, injunctions and other court orders may be issued to complainants because of their behaviours.

Appendix C – Examples of complaints that may be regarded as unreasonable

- Refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance from the Trust's staff;
- Refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within scope, despite having been provided with information about the scope of this complaints procedure;
- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insisting they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- Making unjustified or what may appear to be groundless complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the complaint and seeking to have them replaced;
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds and/or denying statements he/she made at an earlier stage;
- Introducing new information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raising large numbers of detailed questions which are particularly time consuming and costly to respond to and insisting they are all fully answered;
- Electronically recording meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the persons involved;
- Repeatedly making the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- Refusing to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been followed;
- Seeking an unrealistic outcome;
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff whilst a complaint is being looked into, by for example excessive telephone calls or sending e-mails to numerous school staff, writing lengthy complicated letters every few days and expecting immediate responses.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- Maliciously;
- Aggressively or using threats, intimidation or violence;
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- Knowing it to be false or using falsified information;
- Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.



We are His body, living and learning as one.

Appendix D – Complaints Form

Please complete and return to the school who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

1. Basic Information

Your name:

Pupil's name (if applicable):

Pupil's year group:

School:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Email address:

2. Please give specific details of your complaint.

3. What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint?
(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?

4. What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

5. Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature: _____.

Date: _____.

Appendix E – Proceedings of the Hearing Panel

Introductions

1. The Chair of the Hearing Panel should open the meeting, stating the purpose and the format of the meeting to clarify this to all in attendance.
2. Individuals present should introduce themselves stating their reason for being at the meeting.
3. The Clerk will take notes of the meeting, listing who is present and make everyone aware of the confidential nature of the process.

Step 1 – Complainant's case

4. The Chair will request a verbal statement from the Complainant in support of his/her written letter of complaint and why he/she feels the issue has not been resolved. The Panel members can ask questions to make sure they understand the issue from the Complainant's point of view.
5. The Complainant is invited to call any witnesses.
6. The Respondent may question the witnesses after each has spoken.
7. The Panel may question the witnesses after each has spoken.
8. The Respondent may question the Complainant.

Step 2 – Respondent's case

9. The Chair will request a verbal statement from the Respondent (or his/her representative) in support of his/her written account of the complaint and the steps taken to resolve the issue. The Panel members can ask questions to make sure they understand the issue from the Respondent's point of view.
10. The Respondent is invited to call any witnesses
11. The Complainant may question the witnesses after each has spoken.
12. The Panel may question the witnesses after each has spoken.
13. The Complainant may question the Respondent.

Step 3 – Summary and Conclusions

14. Members of the Panel should make sure they fully understand the issues and ask any further questions to clarify any points that are still not clear to them.
15. The Chair will ask the Complainant and the Respondent (or their representative) if they are satisfied that they have provided all the information they wanted or if there is something they wish to add and if they feel they have had a fair hearing.

Step 4 - Deliberations and Decision

16. The Chair will ask all parties to leave except the Panel and the Clerk (to refer to notes taken and record the decision).
17. The Panel will discuss the issues in private.
18. When the Panel has reached a decision, the Clerk will inform everyone concerned in writing, outlining the panel's findings and recommendations. This will take place as soon as possible, but in any event, within 5 school days of the panel meeting.
19. A record will be kept of the outcome of the hearing.
20. The complaint will be reported at the next full Governing Body Meeting.