



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Complaints Policy

Through our loving God

We follow in the footsteps of St Joseph

Who helps us to be gentle, caring and hardworking.

**As we learn together, we love, value and welcome
everyone.**

Date adopted: September 2026

Review date: September 2027

Policy owner: Headteacher

Introduction

This policy sets out St Joseph's Catholic Primary School's approach to dealing with concerns and complaints from parents, carers, pupils, staff and members of the wider school community. It seeks to ensure that concerns are handled promptly, fairly and in line with statutory requirements and best practice, so that relationships between the school and families remain positive and pupils' well-being and learning are protected.

This policy:

- Reflects the school's vision and values: compassionate, respectful, inclusive and rooted in Gospel values.
- Is written for a Voluntary Aided primary school with an attached pre-school and wraparound care provision.
- Is consistent with current UK legislation and guidance applicable to maintained and voluntary aided schools, including the duty for governing bodies to have and publish a complaints procedure and the Standards for British Schools Overseas where relevant.
- Is compliant with the requirements for handling complaints about inspections where applicable.

Purpose

- Ensure that concerns and complaints are resolved promptly, fairly, and effectively.
- Provide a clear, transparent procedure for raising and resolving complaints.
- Protect the school community by keeping records, learning from complaints and taking appropriate action.
- Maintain confidentiality consistent with data protection requirements and legal obligations.

Scope

This policy covers complaints relating to:

- School-based education and services (including pre-school and wraparound care).
- Actions or omissions by staff, governors, volunteers, contractors and third-party providers when they are acting on behalf of the school.
- Admissions, exclusions and behaviour matters (unless separate statutory procedures exist — see "Exceptions").
- Complaints from parents, carers, pupils, staff, volunteers, members of the public and external agencies.

Exceptions (complaints handled under separate procedures)

- Admissions appeals: separate statutory appeal process.
- Exclusions: statutory exclusions procedure.
- Staff grievances or disciplinary matters: separate internal HR procedures.
- Safeguarding (child protection) concerns: follow the school's safeguarding policy and local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- National curriculum content or Ofsted inspection judgements: limited redress — complainants may be advised to contact the relevant regulatory body (e.g., Ofsted) where applicable.

Principles and commitments

- Accessibility: the complaints procedure will be published on the school website and available in hard copy on request.
- Informality first: concerns should normally be raised informally with the class teacher or appropriate member of staff. The school will attempt to resolve issues at this stage where possible.
- Fairness and impartiality: all complaints will be investigated impartially and without prejudice.
- Timeliness: the school will seek to resolve concerns without unreasonable delay, with clear timeframes for each stage.
- Confidentiality: records and communications will be kept confidential and handled in accordance with data protection law, except where disclosure is required by law.
- No retribution: complainants raising concerns in good faith will not be penalised.
- Learning culture: complaints will be recorded and analysed to identify improvements to practice and policy.
- Right to escalate: if a complainant is dissatisfied with a response, they may escalate through the formal stages set out below.
- Independent panel: where a formal panel hearing is required, at least one panel member will be independent of the school's governance and management.

Roles and responsibilities

Headteacher

- Ensure the complaints procedure is implemented and monitored.
- Lead informal resolution where appropriate.
- Oversee investigations at formal stage and ensure timely responses.
- Report summary information on complaints to governors and ensure corrective actions are implemented.

Chair of Governors / Complaints Governor

- Ensure the complaints procedure meets statutory requirements.
- Convene or arrange independent panel members as required.
- Oversee any complaint escalated to the governing body stage.

Governing Body / Local Academy Committee

- Adopt, review and publicise the complaints policy.
- Provide independent panel members for hearings.
- Review annual complaints summary and ensure lessons learned are acted upon.

Staff (including Pre-School and wraparound care staff)

- Try to resolve concerns informally where appropriate.
- Maintain professional records and cooperate with investigations.
- Advise complainants how to escalate if unresolved.

Complainants (parents, carers, pupils, community members)

- Raise concerns promptly and provide clear information and evidence.
- Engage constructively with the school's procedures and avoid abusive behaviour.

Pupils

- May raise concerns via a parent/carers or a trusted staff member. Pupils may be supported by an advocate when giving evidence.

How to raise a concern or complaint — stages

Stage 0 — Informal concern

Who to contact first:

- Pre-school matters: Pre-School lead.
- Class-based concerns: class teacher.
- Wraparound care: Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher
- Whole-school or staffing concerns: Headteacher.

Actions:

- Speak to the appropriate member of staff in person, by phone or by email.
- Aim for early resolution, with agreed actions and timescales recorded.
- Timescale:
- Expect acknowledgement within 2 school days and a resolution within 10 school days where possible.

Stage 1 — Formal complaint (written)

When to use:

- If the complainant remains dissatisfied after informal resolution, or the matter is sufficiently serious to go straight to Stage 1.

How to submit:

- Complaints must be made in writing (letter or email) to the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Headteacher).
- Include name, relationship to school, details of the concern, relevant dates, steps already taken and desired outcomes.

Actions:

- The Headteacher (or designated investigator) acknowledges receipt within 3 school days.
- An investigation is undertaken, which may include interviews, document review and a meeting with the complainant.
- Complainant receives a written outcome, including findings, conclusions and any remedial actions, within 20 school days of acknowledgement (or a clear timescale if further investigation needed).

Record keeping:

- A written record will be kept of the complaint, investigation and outcome.
- Right to escalate:
- If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a review by a complaints panel (Stage 2).

Stage 2 — Complaints panel hearing (governing body level)

When to use:

- When the complainant is not satisfied with the Stage 1 outcome.

Request:

- The complainant must request a panel hearing in writing within 10 school days of the Stage 1 outcome.

Panel composition:

- Panel of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member must be independent of the management and running of the school.
- The panel will elect a chair.

Procedure:

- Panel acknowledges receipt and arranges a hearing within 20 school days.
- All parties receive written details of the hearing, including date, venue and the right to bring a friend or representative.
- The panel may request written statements and may call witnesses.
- The panel will hold a hearing, consider evidence and make findings and recommendations.

Outcome:

- The panel's decision is final. The Chair provides a written report of findings and recommendations to the complainant, the headteacher (or person complained about where relevant) and the governing body within 10 school days of the hearing.
- A copy of findings and recommendations will be available for inspection by the proprietor and headteacher on the school premises (as applicable).

Record keeping:

- A written record of panel proceedings and decisions will be retained.

Other procedural safeguards and practical details

- Support and representation:
- Complainants may be accompanied by a friend, family member or representative at any stage.
- Pupils may be accompanied by a parent/carer or a trusted adult.

Timescale flexibility:

Where necessary, the school will agree reasonable extensions to timescales with the complainant, recording reasons for such extensions.

Vexatious or malicious complaints:

- The school will take proportionate measures if complaints are abusive, malicious or repetitious, including limiting contact and, in very rare cases, refusing to consider new complaints until previous ones are exhausted.

Confidentiality and data protection:

- Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are confidential except where disclosure is required by law.
- Retention periods for complaints records will be set in line with the school's retention schedule and data protection policy.

Anonymous concerns:

- The school will consider anonymous concerns, but it may be more difficult to investigate them fully.

Recording, monitoring and learning

- The school will maintain a central complaints log recording:
- Date received, complainant details, nature of complaint, stages used, outcome and remedial actions, dates and timescales, and whether the complaint was resolved.
- The Headteacher will prepare an anonymised annual summary for the governing body, noting themes, actions taken and any policy or practice changes required.
- The governing body will review complaints data termly as part of its oversight role and use findings to inform school improvement priorities.
- The school will ensure staff training reflects lessons learned from complaints.

Safeguarding and whistleblowing

- If a complaint indicates a possible safeguarding concern, the school's safeguarding procedures will be followed immediately, including referral to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and relevant external agencies.
- Staff wishing to raise concerns about wrongdoing, malpractice or poor practice should refer to the school's whistleblowing policy; complainants may be signposted to that route if appropriate.

Complaints about the Headteacher, governors or panels

- Complaints about the Headteacher: submit in writing to the Chair of Governors.
- Complaints about a governor: send to the Chair of Governors or Clerk to Governors.
- Complaints about the Chair of Governors: send to the Vice-Chair or to the Clerk who will arrange independent oversight.

Complaints about inspections

- Complaints about school inspections (Ofsted or denominational inspection bodies) are subject to the inspection body's own complaint procedures. The school will advise complainants of the appropriate route.
- Where a complaint could be a qualifying complaint to Ofsted, the governing body must cooperate with any request for information and help arrange meetings if required.

Communication and accessibility

- This complaints policy will be published on the school website and available in paper form from the school office.
- The policy will be made available in accessible formats and translated versions on request.
- Staff will be trained to signpost complainants to this policy and to support them in making a complaint.

Review and governance

- This policy will be reviewed every two years (or sooner if required by changes in legislation or significant incidents).
- The governing body is responsible for approving the policy and monitoring its effective implementation.

- The Headteacher is responsible for operational delivery and reporting to governors.

Model forms and templates

- Informal concern log form (brief record)
- Formal complaint form (mandatory for Stage 1)
- Acknowledgement letter/email templates (Stage 1)
- Investigation and outcome letter templates
- Request for panel hearing form (Stage 2)
- Panel hearing paperwork pack: agendas, witness statements and decision letters
- Central complaints log template for the Headteacher to maintain

Training and staff awareness

- All staff (including Pre-School and wraparound care staff) will receive induction training on the complaints process.
- Regular briefings and refresher training for senior leaders and governors who may investigate or sit on panels.
- Maintain a named contact in the office who can advise complainants how to progress a concern.

Accessibility checklist

- Is the complaints policy on the website and available in hard copy?
- Are contact details and named persons clear and up to date?
- Are accessible/translated versions available on request?
- Is there clarity on timescales and escalation routes?

Record retention and confidentiality

- All complaints records will be retained in line with the school's retention schedule and data protection policy.
- Access to complaints records will be limited to those who need it for investigation and governance purposes.
- Complainants and staff should be advised that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where legal or safeguarding obligations require disclosure.

Useful links and external bodies

- Department for Education: school complaints guidance
- Ofsted: complaints about schools (if applicable)
- Local authority: for maintained schools, where help might be available on procedures
- Diocesan education service for policies and guidance, and any appeals related to diocesan matters
- Local authority designated officer (LADO) / safeguarding partners — for concerns about staff conduct or safeguarding

Appendices

Stage 1: Informal Concern Who to contact: Class Teacher or School Office Most concerns can be resolved through discussion with the relevant member of staff.
Resolved? If yes: Matter closed If no: proceed to Stage 2
Stage 2: Formal Complaint Who to contact: Headteacher - Miss Tracey North Submit a written complaint. The complaint will be investigated and a written response provided.
Resolved? If yes: Matter closed If no: proceed to Stage 3
Stage 3: Governors' Complaints Panel Who to contact: Chair of Governors via School Office A panel reviews the complaint and considers all available evidence.
Final Decision School response issued in writing This concludes the school complaints procedure