Autumn | 26-27

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Complaints Policy

Date ratified by Governors:	Autumn 2026
Date of next review of the policy:	Autumn 2027
This policy is reviewed:	**Annually**

Learn together and grow in God's love

Aspiration - Compassion - Community - Faith - Respect – Responsibility

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Section 1: Introduction

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils, so that they can learn and grow in God's love. We value open and honest communication with parents/carers and our wider community, and we want to hear from you if you are worried or unhappy about anything.

Most concerns can be resolved quickly by talking to the right member of staff. This policy explains how to raise a concern or make a complaint, and how we will respond – fairly, openly, and within clear timescales. It applies to complaints from parents/carers and any other person, about any aspect of the school or the services it provides, unless they are dealt with under another procedure (see Section 4).

This policy is published on our school website, and paper copies are available from the school office.

Section 2: Legislation and Guidance

Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 requires the governing board of a maintained school to have, and publish, a procedure for dealing with complaints. This policy follows the DfE's guidance "Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures". It also meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for complaints about our Reception class, and takes account of the Equality Act 2010 and data protection law.

Section 3: Concerns and Complaints

- A **concern** is an expression of worry or doubt about an issue that is considered important, for which reassurance is sought. Concerns are dealt with informally, and most can be resolved quickly
- A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action. A matter will be treated as a formal complaint if the person raising it asks for this, or if they remain dissatisfied after we have tried to resolve it informally

We will:

- Take every concern and complaint seriously, and try to resolve it informally and at the earliest stage wherever possible
- Deal with complaints fairly, impartially and in confidence, within clear timescales, and keep complainants informed of progress
- Address all the points raised, and provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary
- Make sure that pupils are never treated less favourably because a complaint has been made
- Make reasonable adjustments for complainants who need them – for example, because of a disability or if English is not their first language – and help anyone who needs support to make a complaint
- Learn from complaints, and use them to improve what we do

Time Limits

Complaints should be raised as soon as possible, and normally within **3 months** of the incident (or, where there is a series of related incidents, within 3 months of the last one). We will consider complaints made outside this time only in exceptional circumstances. Complaints received during school holidays will be treated as received on the first school day afterwards.

Anonymous Complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. The Headteacher or Chair of Governors will decide whether an anonymous complaint needs investigation, particularly if it raises a safeguarding concern.

Section 4: What This Policy Does Not Cover

Some matters are dealt with under separate procedures, as follows:

Matter	Where it is dealt with
Admissions	Admission appeals, under the School Admissions Appeals Code. Contact the school office for information
Suspensions and permanent exclusions	The statutory suspension and exclusion procedures (see our Relationships and Positive Behaviour Policy)
Statutory assessments of special educational needs, and EHC plans	The Royal Borough of Greenwich. Complaints about the SEN support provided by the school are covered by this policy
Safeguarding and child protection concerns	Tell the DSL, Ms Judith Harvey, straight away. Concerns are dealt with under our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and, where appropriate, by children's social care, the police or the LADO
Whistleblowing by staff	Our Whistleblowing Policy
Staff grievances and disciplinary matters	The school's staff grievance and disciplinary procedures. If a complaint results in action being taken against a member of staff, the complainant will be told that action has been taken, but not what it is
Services provided by other organisations on the school site (for example, clubs run by outside providers)	The provider's own complaints procedure
Content of the national curriculum	The Department for Education
Statutory assessments (such as SATs) – maladministration	The Standards and Testing Agency

Complaints about the teaching of religious education, collective worship and the Catholic life of the school are dealt with under this policy. The Archdiocese of Southwark may also be able to advise.

Section 5: The Complaints Procedure

There is an informal stage and two formal stages:

Stage	Who deals with it
Informal	The class teacher or relevant member of staff, and then the Phase Leader
Stage 1 (formal)	The Headteacher (or the Chair of Governors, if the complaint is about the Headteacher)
Stage 2 (formal)	A panel of governors

Informal Stage: Raising a Concern

- Please speak to the class teacher or the member of staff concerned first. It may help to make an appointment through the school office, so that the member of staff can give you their full attention
- The member of staff will listen, and will aim to resolve the concern. If they need to look into it, they will tell you when you can expect a response – normally within 5 school days
- If you are not satisfied, or do not feel able to speak to the member of staff, you can ask to meet the Phase Leader, who will try to resolve the matter, normally within 5 school days
- Any actions agreed will be followed up, and a further meeting offered where helpful, to check

the matter has been resolved

If you remain dissatisfied, you can make a formal complaint.

Stage 1: Formal Complaint to the Headteacher

- Put your complaint in writing to the Headteacher, using the form in Appendix 1 or by letter or email to the school office. If you need help to do this, please ask the school office
- The Headteacher will acknowledge your complaint in writing within **5 school days**, and may invite you to a meeting to discuss it
- The Headteacher will investigate your complaint (or ask a senior member of staff to do so), and will give you a written response within **10 school days** of the acknowledgement. The response will explain the findings, any action the school will take, and how to take your complaint to Stage 2 if you are not satisfied
- If it is not possible to respond within this time, the Headteacher will write to you to explain why, and give a new date

Complaints about the Headteacher, governors or the governing board:

- A complaint about the **Headteacher** should be made to the Chair of Governors, Mr Greg Mulligan, in writing via the school office, marked "Confidential – for the attention of the Chair of Governors". The Chair will deal with it at Stage 1
- A complaint about a **governor** should be made to the Chair of Governors. A complaint about the **Chair of Governors** should be made to the Vice-Chair, Mrs Susan Collins, via the Clerk to the Governors
- If a complaint is about the whole governing board, or most of it, the Clerk will arrange for the complaint to be investigated by an independent person, such as someone from the local authority or the Archdiocese

Stage 2: Governing Board Complaints Panel

- If you are not satisfied with the Stage 1 response, you can ask for your complaint to be heard by a panel of governors. Please write to the Clerk to the Governors, via the school office, within **10 school days** of receiving the Stage 1 response, explaining why you remain dissatisfied
- The Clerk will acknowledge your request within **5 school days**, and the panel will meet within **20 school days** of receiving it. The Clerk will agree a date with you
- The panel will be made up of three governors who have no prior involvement in, or detailed knowledge of, the complaint. The Clerk will support the panel, and take minutes
- You will be told, at least **10 school days** before the meeting, what will happen, and asked to send any documents you want the panel to see. All parties will receive the same papers at least **5 school days** before the meeting. The panel will not consider new complaints that were not raised at Stage 1
- You may bring a friend, relative or other person to support you. Legal representation is not normally needed. Children will not normally be asked to attend, although their views may be given in writing
- The meeting is held in private, and is designed to be as informal and non-adversarial as possible. The panel will hear from you and from the school, and may ask questions of both. The procedure is set out in Appendix 2
- The panel may uphold the complaint in whole or in part, or dismiss it in whole or in part. It may decide what action should be taken to resolve the complaint, and recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures
- The panel will write to you and the Headteacher (or the person complained about) with its decision, and the reasons for it, within **5 school days** of the meeting. This is the school's final response

Section 6: If You Are Still Not Satisfied

- If you believe the school has not followed this procedure properly, or has acted unreasonably,

you can contact the **Department for Education's School Complaints Unit** after Stage 2 has finished, by using the online "Contact the Department for Education" form at www.gov.uk. The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of the complaint, or overturn the school's decision

- Ofsted may also consider complaints about a school as a whole (for example, about the quality of education or leadership), but not individual cases. Information is available at www.gov.uk/complain-to-ofsted-about-a-school

Section 7: EYFS Complaints

In line with the EYFS statutory framework, written complaints about the EYFS requirements in our Reception class will be investigated, and the complainant told of the outcome within **28 days**. A written record of these complaints and their outcome is kept, and made available to Ofsted on request.

Section 8: Unreasonable Behaviour and Serial Complaints

We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly. However, we will not accept abusive, threatening, discriminatory or aggressive behaviour towards staff or governors, whether in person, in writing, by phone or on social media. Where a complainant behaves unreasonably, or repeatedly raises the same complaint after the procedure has finished, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors may, after warning them:

- Limit how, and how often, they can contact the school – for example, to one named person, or in writing only
- Tell them in writing that the procedure has finished, and that the matter is closed
- In serious cases, restrict their access to the school site. Any restriction will be reviewed regularly

We ask that complaints are not raised on social media, as this can make them harder to resolve and may be distressing for those involved.

Section 9: Roles and Responsibilities

- **The governing board** makes sure this policy is in place, published and followed; considers complaints at Stage 2 through a panel; and reviews anonymised information about complaints each year, to improve the school
- **The Headteacher** makes sure staff understand this policy, deals with complaints at Stage 1, keeps records, and reports to governors each year on the number and type of complaints and their outcomes
- **All staff** listen to concerns, try to resolve them at the first point of contact, and tell the Headteacher about any complaint
- **The Clerk to the Governors** is the contact point for Stage 2, arranges the panel meeting, circulates papers, supports the panel and takes minutes

Section 10: Records, Confidentiality and Recording Meetings

- Records of complaints, including correspondence, notes of meetings and outcomes, are kept confidential and stored securely in line with data protection law and our records retention schedule. Records may be seen by the Secretary of State or Ofsted on request
- Meetings and phone calls must not be recorded without the agreement of everyone involved
- A complaint may be withdrawn at any time. We will ask the complainant to confirm this in writing

Section 11: Monitoring and Review

The governing board will review this policy annually, and approve it. The Headteacher will report each year to the governing board on complaints received, so that the school can learn from them.

Appendix 1: Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the school office, marked for the attention of the Headteacher (or, if your complaint is about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors).

Detail	Please complete
Your name	
Pupil's name and class (if relevant)	
Your relationship to the pupil	
Address and postcode	
Telephone number(s)	
Email address	
Please give details of your complaint, including dates, names of any witnesses, and any documents	
What have you done so far to resolve your complaint? (For example, who have you spoken to, and what was the response?)	
What would you like to happen to resolve your complaint?	
Are you attaching any documents? If so, please list them	
Signature and date	

For school use	Record
Date received	
Date acknowledgement sent, and by whom	
Complaint referred to	
Date of response	

Appendix 2: Stage 2 Panel Meeting Procedure

- The Clerk meets the panel beforehand, to confirm the procedure and who will chair the panel. The Clerk also explains the procedure to the complainant
- All parties enter the room together. The chair welcomes everyone, makes introductions, confirms that everyone has received the papers, and explains the procedure and the expectation that everyone will be treated with courtesy and respect
- The complainant explains their complaint, and why they remain dissatisfied after Stage 1
- The Headteacher (or the person who dealt with Stage 1) and the panel may ask the complainant questions
- The Headteacher explains the school's response to the complaint
- The complainant and the panel may ask the Headteacher questions
- Witnesses may be called, if agreed in advance, and may be questioned
- The complainant and then the Headteacher sum up
- The chair explains that the panel will now consider the complaint in private, and that everyone will receive the decision in writing within 5 school days. All parties leave together
- The panel considers the complaint, on the balance of probabilities, and reaches a decision on each point
- The Clerk sends the decision letter, signed by the chair of the panel, to the complainant and the Headteacher, setting out the decision on each point, the reasons, any action to be taken, and information about contacting the DfE if the complainant believes the procedure was not followed properly