

HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC SCHOOL



Complaints Procedure Policy

Date agreed	Draft policy
Next review date	June 2027 (or in line with Catholic Education Services (CES) / LBWF Changes)

1. Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at Holy Family Catholic School. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the school about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

A **concern** may be defined as *“an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.”*

A **complaint** may be defined as *“an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.”*

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 this complaints procedure.

Holy Family Catholic School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, the school will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher, **Mrs Carolyn Laws**, may refer you to a suitable alternative senior member of staff.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, they will refer you to a senior leader.

3. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint may be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, provided they have appropriate consent.

Concerns should normally be raised with the relevant class teacher or member of staff. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints, as they have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance to the Headteacher, **Mrs Carolyn Laws**, via the school office. Please mark correspondence **Private and Confidential**.

Complaints about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, **Mr Justin Madubuko**, via the school office, marked **Private and Confidential**.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor, or the governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to Governors via the school office, marked **Private and Confidential**.

A complaints form is available from the school office. Support is available for completing the form if required.

In accordance with equality law, the school will consider making reasonable adjustments where necessary to enable complainants to access this procedure.

4. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, as appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants investigation.

5. Time scales

You must raise the complaint within **three months** of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents has occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents.

We will consider complaints made outside of this timeframe if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time will be considered as received on the first school day after the holiday period.

6. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of facilities or services by Holy Family Catholic School, other than those listed below which are dealt with under separate statutory procedures.

Exceptions include:

- **Admissions to schools** – Local Authority (London Borough of Waltham Forest)
- **Statutory assessment of Special Educational Needs** – Local Authority
- **School re-organisation proposals** – Local Authority
- **Child protection matters** – handled under the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Serious concerns may be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), **Carolyn Coyston (Waltham Forest)** or the MASH team.
- **Exclusion of children from school** – governed by statutory exclusion procedures (www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions). Complaints about application of behaviour policy may be considered under this procedure.

- **Whistleblowing** – the school has an internal whistleblowing procedure. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for whistleblowing in education: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.
- **Staff grievances and conduct** – will be dealt with under the school's internal procedures. Outcomes of disciplinary matters will not be shared with complainants.
- **Services provided by external providers** – must be raised directly with the provider concerned.
- **National Curriculum content** – concerns should be raised with the Department for Education.

Where other bodies are investigating aspects of a complaint, this may result in suspension of the school's procedure until their investigations are complete.

If legal action is initiated, the school will consider whether to suspend the procedure.

7. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the school will seek to resolve the complaint. Where appropriate, we may:

- acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part
- offer an explanation
- offer an apology
- explain actions taken or planned
- indicate changes to procedures or policies
- ensure the issue will not recur

8. Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, this must be confirmed in writing.

STAGE 1 – FORMAL INVESTIGATION

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless the complaint is about the Headteacher), via the school office.

The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt within **5 school days**.

The Headteacher (or appointed investigator) will:

- clarify the nature of the complaint
- seek desired outcomes
- investigate the matter
- interview relevant parties where necessary
- keep written records of the investigation

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Headteacher will provide a written response within **10 school days** of receipt of the complaint where possible. If this is not possible, the complainant will be informed of the revised timescale.

The response will include:

- details of the investigation
- findings and decision
- reasons for the decision
- any actions taken or planned
- details of how to escalate to Stage 2

Where the complaint is about the Headteacher, Stage 1 will be conducted by the Chair of Governors or a suitably skilled governor.

Where the complaint is about the governing body as a whole, an independent investigator may be appointed.

STAGE 2 – COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE (GOVERNORS PANEL)

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 1 outcome, they may escalate the complaint to Stage 2.

Requests must be made to the Clerk to Governors within **10 school days** of receipt of the Stage 1 decision.

The Clerk will acknowledge receipt within **5 school days** and arrange a meeting of the complaints committee.

The committee will consist of **three impartial governors** who have had no prior involvement in the complaint.

The meeting will normally be arranged within **15 school days**, where reasonably practicable.

The committee may:

- dismiss the complaint
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- decide on appropriate action
- recommend changes to systems or procedures

The Clerk will notify the complainant and the school of the decision in writing within **5 school days** of the meeting.

The decision of the complaints committee is final within the school's complaints process.

9. Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school has not handled the complaint in accordance with this procedure or has acted unlawfully or unreasonably, they may contact the Department for Education:

- <https://www.education.gov.uk/contactus>
- Telephone: 0370 000 2288
- Address: Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the complaint but will consider whether the school has followed statutory requirements.

Complaints Form (Appendix – CES Model)

Please complete and return this form to the school office. You may also request support in completing this form if required.

All information will be treated as **Private and Confidential**.

1. Your details

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone number:

Email address:

Are you making this complaint on behalf of someone else?

Yes No

If yes, please provide their details and your relationship to them:

2. Details of the complaint

Please provide full details of your complaint. Include relevant dates, names of individuals involved (if known), and any other relevant information.

(Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

3. What action have you already taken to try to resolve the complaint?

Please describe any informal discussions or steps already taken (e.g. speaking to a member of staff).

4. What outcome are you seeking?

Please state clearly what you would like the school to do to resolve your complaint.

5. Supporting evidence

Please indicate any documents or evidence you are enclosing (if applicable):

- Emails
- Letters
- Reports
- Other (please specify): _____

6. Accessibility and support needs

Do you require any reasonable adjustments to participate in the complaints process?

- Yes No

If yes, please provide details:

7. Declaration

I confirm that the information provided in this complaint is true to the best of my knowledge.

I understand that the school will process this complaint in accordance with its published Complaints Procedure.

Signature:

Date:

For Office Use Only

Date received:

Received by:

Acknowledgement sent (within 5 school days):

Yes No

Complaint reference number:

Allocated to:

Headteacher

Chair of Governors

Complaints Panel (Stage 2)