St. Joseph's R.C. Primary School

Complaints Policy

September 2026

Review: September 2027

"Treat others as you wish to be treated"

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Standards, Safeguarding and Curriculum Committee.

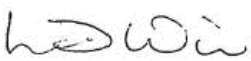
The policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Standards, Safeguarding and Curriculum Committee September 2026

It is due for review in September 2027.

Hayley Francis Date: September 2026
Head Teacher



Lindsay Wise Date: September 2026
Chair of Governors



1. INTRODUCTION

1. Any person, including members of the general public, may express a concern or make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that St Joseph's RC Primary School provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply, for example admissions or exclusions procedures. The school does not limit concerns/complaints to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

2. The difference between a 'concern' and a 'complaint':

   a. A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought';

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

3. It is in the interests of everyone that concerns/complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke these formal procedures. The school takes informal concerns as seriously as formal complaints and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

4. However, there will be occasions when complainants want to raise their concerns/complaints formally. In these instances, the school's formal complaints procedure should be invoked and will be followed through the various stages.

5. The purposes of this Complaints Policy and the procedures outlined within are:

   a. to resolve concerns/complaints;

b. to give complainants a means to raise issues of concern/complaints and to have them addressed;

c. to inform complainants the most appropriate person to whom a concern/complaint should be raised;

d. to encourage all parties to raise and/or respond to concerns/complaints as quickly as possible so that they may be dealt with while the matter is fresh in peoples' minds; and

e. to stress that at all stages of this policy the discussions, consideration and hearings will be investigatory rather than adversarial in their nature.

2. THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL GOVERNOR

6. No individual governor may deal with either a concern or a complaint. A parent may approach a governor to ask what they should do if they have a concern or a complaint.

7. Governors should not get into discussion with a parent but should advise them only of the procedure to follow, i.e. to contact either the designated teacher with responsibility for their child or the headteacher.

8. If the situation is such that the governor has to listen in order to help to direct the concern/complaint, they must accept that this will prejudice their impartiality if the issue develops and they must inform the chair of the governing body immediately.

3. SELECTING THE MOST APPROPRIATE PROCEDURE

Note: In order to avoid future dispute, all stages of the procedure, however informal, must be properly documented and recorded.

At Appendix A is a simple list of the sequence of events to be followed.

Initial Concerns – Informal Resolution

9. Most concerns/complaints can be handled without the need for formal procedures and this should be the objective of all parties involved in the Initial Concerns - Informal Resolution process.

10. The person who has the concern/complaint should raise it with the class teacher responsible for his/her child as soon as possible, and certainly within 5 school days of the incident, so that the matter may be discussed and resolved while it is still fresh in everyone's mind which is ideally within 10 school days of the incident.

11. Should the person raising the concern/complaint be unable to resolve the matter with the child's class teacher, a member of the senior leadership team, who will seek to resolve the matter.

12. If the matter is satisfactorily resolved at this stage, a line can be drawn under it and the matter is considered closed. Any documents should be filed and retained.

Formal Procedures – Formal Resolution

13. If neither the senior manager nor the person raising the concern/complaint considers that the Informal Resolution process is resolving the matter, the complainant should be given a copy of this Complaints Policy. Should the complainant subsequently wish to raise a formal complaint, they must do so using the Notification of Concern/Complaint form at Appendix B to the Complaints Policy within 10 school days of receipt of the Complaints Policy.

14. The completed Notification of Concern/Complaint form should be sent to the school's Complaints Coordinator. At St Joseph's RC Primary, the Complaints Coordinator is the headteacher – Mrs Francis.

15. Where the first approach has been made to a governor, the next step is to refer the complainant to the Complaints Coordinator who will advise him/her about the appropriate procedure. Governors should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved in the early stages of a complaint/concern in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage in the procedure.

16. The school's complaints procedure does not replace the arrangements for dealing with certain types of complaint that fall outside the remit of the complaints procedure and which are covered by other policies, e.g. Admissions Procedures, Child Protection Procedures, Special Educational Needs Procedures, Pupil Exclusion Procedures and Staff Disciplinary Procedures.

4. THE FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage One – Complaint heard by Complaints Coordinator

17. Following receipt of the Notification of Concern/Complaint form, the Complaints Coordinator will attempt to resolve the complaint by meeting with the complainant and investigating the complaint – the Stage One Meeting. This meeting will normally be held within 5 school days of receipt of the Notification of Complaint form.

18. The headteacher may consider that the circumstances surrounding the complaint make it appropriate to refer the matter immediately to the chair of the governing body. The chair (or nominee) will then conduct the Stage One process and have a meeting with the complainant and investigating the complaint.

19. Where the complaint concerns the headteacher, it will be referred immediately to the chair of the governing body. The chair (or nominee) will then conduct the Stage One process and have a meeting with the complainant and investigating the complaint.

21. The Complaints Coordinator (or other person carrying out Stage One) will send to the complainant a written 'Note of Meeting' within 5 school days of the Stage One meeting taking place. This note will summarise the conclusions reached and inform the complainant that they may appeal the conclusions (i.e. take the complaint to Stage Two – see below) if they wish, but if so they must do so within 10 school days of the Stage One meeting. The

'Note of Meeting' will give details of how this appeal can be lodged, normally by letter to the clerk to the governing body.

Stage Two – Complaint heard by Governing Body's Appeal Panel

General

22. The complainant should write to the clerk to the governing body stating that they wish to appeal the conclusions reached under Stage One.

23. The clerk to the governing body will then convene a Governing Body Appeal Panel to hear the complaint. The panel should sit within 20 school days of receipt of the complainant's wish to appeal.

24. The Governing Body's Appeal Panel is the final school-based stage in the Complaints Procedure and it is not convened merely to rubber-stamp previous decisions.

25. Individual complaints must not be heard by the whole governing body at any stage as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up under any other procedure.

26. The panel of governors, which must be impartial (and must be seen to be so), must consist of 3 members of the governing body. No governor may sit on the panel if he/she has had any prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. Neither the headteacher nor the chair of the governing body should be a member of this panel. The panel should elect their own chair.

27. The panel may have the assistance of an external advisor to advise on procedure.

28. The objective of the Stage Two process is to resolve the complaint in an open and transparent manner. Both parties should normally be present while the complaint is being described and responded to. However, there may be situations where the chair of the governing body considers that the relationship between the complainant and the school has broken down to such an extent that any further meeting that they jointly attend would only become adversarial in nature. The chair of the governing body may then decide that the Stage Two meeting should be held in 2 parts, with each party and their witnesses meeting with the Appeal Panel on their own. Should the chair of the governing body decide that this is the most appropriate way to carry out the Stage Two process, he will advise both parties, the clerk to the Appeal Panel, and the chair of the Appeal Panel accordingly.

Remit of the Appeal Panel

29. The Appeal Panel can:

a. dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;

b. uphold the complaint in whole or in part;

c. decide on the appropriate action to resolve the complaint; and/or

d. recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

30. It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so.

31. The aim of the hearing, which will be heard in private, is to resolve the complaint, and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it is recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour.

32. The panel accepts that complainants may feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. The chair of the panel should ensure that proceedings are as welcoming as possible. Care should be taken to ensure that the layout of the room is informal and the tone of the meeting is not adversarial.

33. Governors sitting on the panel will be aware of the school's Complaints Procedure.

Roles and Responsibilities

34. The school will ensure that the meeting is clerked.

35. The role of the clerk to the panel is to:

a. Ensure that all parties have a copy of the Complaints Procedure;

b. Set the date, time and venue for the hearing, ensuring that arrangements are the most convenient to all parties. The hearing should be held within 20 school days of receipt of the complainant's wish to invoke stage 2 of the Procedure. The venue should be accessible. (Note: Should either party fail to attend the hearing, the panel will determine the missing party's case on their written submission. Once parties have agreed to a hearing date, the date will only be re-arranged in exceptional circumstances. Any rearranged date should be agreed within 10 school days of the original hearing date.)

c. Ten school days before the hearing, collect any written evidence of other documentation for use at the hearing, together with the names of any witnesses that the complainant or the school may wish to call;

d. Collate all written material and send it to the parties, to arrive at least 5 school days prior to the hearing;

e. Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive for the hearing;

f. Record all proceedings;

g. Notify, in writing, all parties of the panel's decision, within 5 school days following the hearing.

36. The role of the chair of the panel is to ensure that:

a. The remit of the panel is explained to the parties and that each party has the opportunity to put their case without undue interruption;

b. The issues are addressed;

c. Parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at their ease;

d. The hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with dignity and respect;

e. The panel is open-minded and acts accordingly;

f. No member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;

g. Each side is given the opportunity to state their case and to ask questions;

h. Written material has been supplied to all parties;

i. If a related issue arises at the hearing, all parties are given the opportunity to adjourn to consider the related issue and then comment on it;

j. Any new issues raised at the hearing are referred to a fresh process, to be dealt with separately from this panel meeting;

k. Any procedural issues that arise are determined by the panel.

Check List for Panel Hearing

37. The panel will take account of the following:

a. The hearing is as informal as is possible:

b. Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their own evidence:

c. After an introduction by the chair of the panel, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and to be followed by their witnesses:

d. The headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken, but only to clarify what they are saying. (Note: if the chair of the governing body or his nominee has conducted stage one of the procedure, then that person should take this role at the hearing, but in such a case, the headteacher may be called as a witness.)

e. The headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses:

f. The complainant may question both the headteacher and the school's witnesses after each has spoken:

g. The panel may ask questions at any time up to this point, after which they may ask no further questions:

h. The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint:

i. The headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint:

j. The chair explains that both parties will receive the written decision of the panel from the clerk within 5 school days:

k. Both parties leave together whilst the panel decides on the issues. The clerk and any advisor to the panel may remain with the panel during their discussion, but conclusions and recommendations are the responsibility solely of the panel members.

38. Paragraph 28 describes a circumstance where it is considered appropriate for the complainant and the school not to attend the Stage Two panel hearing together. If this applies, the procedure will be:

a. Each party will attend the Appeal Panel separately and will not meet before or after their attendance(s) at the panel hearing. Separate waiting rooms must be provided.

b. The hearing is as informal as possible:

c. Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence:

d. As part of the introduction to each party, the chair of the panel will explain how the hearing will operate and that they will receive the written decision of the panel from the clerk within 5 school days:

e. After introduction, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint and to be followed by their witnesses:

f. The panel may ask questions at any time:

g. The complainant then leaves the panel meeting:

h. The headteacher then attends the panel hearing and, after introduction, is invited to make the school's response to the complaint, and to be followed by their witnesses:

i. The panel may ask questions at any time:

j. The headteacher then leaves the panel hearing:

k. The panel may then recall either party to resolve any discrepancies in the material presented to them:

l. When the panel is satisfied that they have a proper understanding of the complainant's position and the school's response, both parties will be advised that their participation in the hearing is complete and that they should leave:

m. The panel then decides on the issues. The clerk and any advisor to the panel may remain with the panel during their discussion, but conclusions and recommendations are the responsibility only of the panel members.

Notification of the Panel's Decision

39. The chair of the panel will ensure that the complainant is notified in writing of the panel's decision, with reasons clearly defined in plain English, within 5 school days.

40. If the complainant requires clarification concerning points in the letter, this will be provided by the chair of the panel.

41. In case the complainant is not satisfied that the complaints procedures were conducted properly and fairly, the letter will advise that there is a further Right of Review of the Conduct of the Procedure.

Anonymous Complaints

42. Anonymous complaints will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances would include serious concerns such as Child Protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school will involve external agencies or else conduct its own internal review to test whether there is any corroborative evidence which might trigger a formal investigation.

Vexatious Complaints

43. There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the governing body will inform him/her in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Stage 3 - Right of Review of the Conduct of the Procedure

44. In case the complainant is not satisfied that the complaints procedures were conducted properly and fairly, the letter containing the panel's decision (see para 39) will explain that there is a further right to request an investigation into the application of due process by applying to the Diocesan Director of Education at the Archdiocese of Cardiff and providing the address. The letter to the complainant must explain that such a request must be made within 10 days of the Appeal Panel Hearing.

45. This stage is essentially a review of the conduct of the school-based parts of the procedure. It cannot reverse any judgements of the school. It would, however, involve some examination of the context of the complaint to establish whether or not the school had conducted the procedure and come to its judgements in a reasonable way.

46. A copy of the report will be sent to the complainant, the headteacher, the chair of the appeal panel and the chair of the governing body.

47. The report from the Diocesan Education Service may give recommendations to the school governing body.

This policy was approved by the governing body at their meeting on 6th July 2023

Appendices:

A. Concern/Complaint – Sequence of Events.

B. Notification of Concern/Complaint Form.

Appendix A

CONCERN/COMPLAINT – SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

1. Initial Concern – Informal Resolution

a. Concern/Complaint raised with Class Teacher within 5 school days of incident

1.) Discussed and resolved within 10 school days of incident – No further action;

2.) Not resolved with Class Teacher - escalated to a member of the senior management.

3.) Discussed and resolved with senior manager – No further action;

4.) Not resolved with senior manager – escalated to Formal Procedures – Formal Resolution.

2. Formal Procedures – Formal Resolution

a. Copy of Complaints Policy given to complainant;

b. Formal complaint to be raised within 10 days of receipt of policy using official form (Appendix B);

c. Sent to Complaints Coordinator- headteacher – Mrs Francis;

d. If 1st approach made by complainant to governor, complainant to be referred to Complaints Coordinator – advised about appropriate procedure.

3. Stage 1 – Complaint heard by Complaints Coordinator

Either: after receipt of Notification of Complaint form – meeting between complainant and Complaints Coordinator within 5 days after receipt;

Or: if circumstances appropriate or concern/complaint about headteacher - straight to chair of governing body/nominee - meeting between complainant and chair/nominee within 5 days after receipt.

a. Complaints Coordinator or chair/nominee sends written Note of Meeting within 5 days of meeting;

b. Complainant may appeal (Stage 2) but must do so within 10 days of meeting.

4. Stage 2 – Complaint heard by Governing Body's Appeal Panel

a. Complainant to write to clerk to governors within 10 days of stage 1 meeting;

b. Governing Body Appeal Panel convened – to hear appeal within 20 days of receipt of complainant's wish to appeal;

c. Parties notified of panel's decision within 5 days after the hearing;

d. Complainant satisfied – end of process;
e. Complainant not satisfied that procedures were conducted properly - Right of Review of the Conduct of the Procedure exercised.

5. Stage 3 – Right of Review of the Conduct of the Procedure

Note: This is a review of the conduct of the procedure, not the outcome.

a. Apply to Diocesan Director of Education within 10 days of Appeal Panel hearing.

Appendix B.

To: Mrs Hayley Francis , Complaints Coordinator, St Joseph's RC Primary School, The Avenue, Ross on Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 45AW

NOTIFICATION OF CONCERN/COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return this form to the clerk to the governing body who will acknowledge receipt and will explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	
Pupil's name:	
Your relationship to pupil:	
Your address:	
	Your postcode:
Daytime telephone number:	Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint: Possible Witnesses to your concern/complaint:	
What action, if any have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)	