

ST JOHN FISHER CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

When You Love To Learn
You Learn To Love



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

December 2025

Reviewed by Governors: December 2025

Next Review: December 2028

Mission Statement

"We stand united in our faith with the courage to build a loving world of truth, justice, peace and wisdom."

Our school community is guided by Gospel values. We recognise that strong relationships with parents, carers and pupils are essential. Most concerns can be resolved informally; however, where this is not possible, this procedure ensures a fair, transparent and timely process for managing complaints.

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out how St John Fisher Catholic Primary School manages complaints from parents, carers, members of the public or other stakeholders.

This procedure applies to all complaints **except** those listed below, which have their own statutory processes:

Not covered by this policy

- Admissions
- Child Protection / Safeguarding allegations
- Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures
- Whistleblowing
- Exclusions
- Requests under the Freedom of Information Act
- Data Protection / GDPR concerns
- Complaints about Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) or SEN decisions (handled via SEND Tribunal routes)
- Complaints about services provided by other agencies

Complainants will be signposted to the appropriate procedure.

2. Principles

St John Fisher Catholic Primary School will ensure:

- Complaints are handled **promptly, fairly, confidentially** and **without prejudice**.
 - Complainants can raise concerns in **writing, by email, by telephone, or in person**.
 - Reasonable adjustments are offered for parents with disabilities or language barriers.
 - All parties are treated with dignity, respect and courtesy.
 - Complaints are resolved as quickly as possible through open dialogue.
 - Governors fulfil their statutory duties to ensure the school remains faithful to its **Catholic character**.
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3. Safeguarding Concerns

Complaints that raise **child protection or safeguarding concerns** must be referred immediately to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** and handled under the **Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy**, not this complaints procedure.

If an allegation concerns a member of staff, the Headteacher must contact the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**.

4. Accessibility

The school will make reasonable adjustments to ensure:

- Support for complainants with disabilities or communication needs
 - Translation or interpreter assistance when required
 - Acceptance of complaints in alternative formats, including verbal complaints
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5. Informal Resolution (Stage 0)

Most concerns can be resolved informally.

Parents/carers should first speak to the **class teacher**, either in person, by phone, or in writing.

If the concern is not resolved, the complainant may proceed to Stage 1.

6. Stage 1 – Formal Complaint to the Headteacher

Complaints at this stage should be made to the Headteacher:

- In writing
- By email
- Or verbally (a written record will be made by the school)

Upon receipt, the Headteacher will:

1. **Acknowledge the complaint within 5 school days**
2. Consider the complaint, gather any necessary information, and meet with the complainant if appropriate
3. **Provide a written response within 15 school days**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may proceed to Stage 2.

7. Stage 2 – Complaint to the Chair of Governors

Complaints may be escalated to the **Chair of Governors** within **10 school days** of receiving the Stage 1 response.

Complaints should be addressed to the Chair at the school or via the Clerk to Governors at the Civic Offices, Bexleyheath.

The Chair will:

1. **Acknowledge receipt within 5 school days**
2. Investigate the complaint (this may include meeting with the complainant)
3. **Issue a written response within 15 school days**

If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant may request a formal hearing at Stage 3.

8. Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

A written request for a panel hearing must be made within **10 school days** of receiving the Stage 2 response.

The panel will:

- Consist of **three members, one of whom is independent of the governance and management of the school** (statutory requirement)
- Meet within **15 school days** of the request
- Provide all parties with the opportunity to submit written evidence
- Permit both the complainant and the Headteacher to attend and be accompanied by a friend or representative

Panel powers

The panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Recommend actions to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to school systems or procedures

Outcome

The panel will:

- Write to all parties with its findings within **10 school days**
- Ensure outcomes are copied to the Headteacher and Chair of Governors

The panel's decision is **final**.

9. Complaints Concerning Religious Education or Catholic Ethos

Complaints specifically relating to:

- Religious Education
- Collective Worship
- Catholic life or ethos of the school

may be referred to the **Diocese of Southwark** if the complainant is dissatisfied with the governing body's response.

Details are available from the school office.

10. Record Keeping (Statutory Requirement)

The school must:

- Keep a **written record** of all formal complaints
- Record whether they were **resolved at Stage 1, 2 or 3**
- Record actions taken as a result
- Ensure records are kept **separately from pupil files**
- Make records available to **Ofsted** upon request

All complaint information is held securely and confidentially.

11. Serial or Unreasonable Complaints

The school may refuse to engage further with complainants whose behaviour is:

- Abusive
- Persistent
- Harassing
- Vexatious

Guidance from the DfE will be followed when applying this rule.

12. Independent Review

If a complainant remains dissatisfied, they may refer the matter to:

Secretary of State for Education

Sanctuary Buildings

Great Smith Street

London SW1P 3BT

The Secretary of State will only intervene where:

- The governing body has acted **unreasonably**, or

- The governing body has **failed to carry out a statutory duty**

General concerns about the school may also be raised directly with **Ofsted**, but Ofsted does not investigate individual complaints.

13. Monitoring and Review

The governing body will review the effectiveness of this policy every **three years**, or sooner if required by legislation or guidance.

Patterns of complaints may be used to identify improvements in school systems.