

# Complaints Policy

## 2023-2026



## CORPUS CHRISTI CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ONE BODY, MANY PARTS



Written and reviewed	September 2023 (Based on Leeds City Council Model Schools Complaint Policy- Annexe A, Annexe B Complaints Toolkit Schools July 2021)		
Approved by	Governing Body	Meeting Date	21 <sup>st</sup> September 2023
Ratified			
Review cycle	Every 3 years		
Next review	September 2026		

## Complaints Policy

1. This policy statement sets out the school's approach to dealing with concerns and complaints from parents, carers and others. Further details of how we handle them are contained in our procedures document, which you can obtain on request from the school office.
2. We value good home, school and community relations and will, therefore, do everything we can to establish and maintain them. This includes seeking to resolve any concerns or complaints promptly, and to the satisfaction of all concerned.
3. We welcome feedback from parents, carers and the community on what is felt we do well, or not so well, as a school. We will consider carefully all feedback, whether positive or negative, and will review our policies and practices accordingly.
4. We will treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously and will advise parents, carers and others of the school's procedures for dealing with their concerns. In return, we expect parents and other complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the school community. In particular, any disagreement with the school should not be expressed inappropriately or in front of pupils. **This includes the use of social media.**
5. All school staff and members of the Governing Body, will receive a copy of this policy statement and will be familiar with the school's procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints, to which they will have access as required. The policy is available on the school website [www.corpusprimaryleeds.org](http://www.corpusprimaryleeds.org) ; a hard copy can be provided to anyone who requests it.
6. The school's procedures will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary.
7. Staff and governors will receive training in handling parental concerns and complaints as appropriate. This may be on an individual basis, or as a group activity for all staff, or for specific groups, such as the Office Staff or members of the Governing Body.
8. The government and the Local Authority (LA) advocate resolution of concerns and complaints from parents or other parties at school level wherever possible, in the interests of maintaining good home/ school/ community relations. The role of the local authority in advising parents (other complainants) and schools on the handling of concerns and complaints is set out in the school's procedures.

## Complaints Procedure

### Procedures for dealing with complaints

The majority of concerns from parents, carers and others are handled under the following general procedures.

To ensure you receive an effective response to your complaint, it will be helpful if you:

- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- express the complaint in full as early as possible; complaints must be raised within three months of an incident occurring (although exceptional circumstances will be considered.
- respond promptly to request for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint.
- ask for assistance if needed (we will ensure that adjustments are made so that the complaint process is accessible to you e.g., providing information in alternative formats or supporting you to make your complaint) and
- treat all those involved in the complaint, with respect.

At each stage in the procedure, Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it
  - will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

The procedure is divided into three stages:

**The informal stage** aims to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in school.

**Stage One** is the first formal stage at which written complaints are considered by the head teacher or the designated governor, who has special responsibility for dealing with complaints.

**Stage Two** is the next stage once stage one has been worked through. It involves a complaints appeal panel of governors.

How each of these stages operates is explained below:

### **Informal stage – your initial contact with the school**

1. Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you make them known to us. If you are a parent of a child in our school, the first point of contact should be your child's class teacher. Other parties wishing to raise a concern or lodge a complaint should contact the head teacher in the first instance.
2. Once your concern is made known to us, we will see you, or contact you by telephone or in writing, as soon as possible. If it is necessary, all members of staff know how to refer to the appropriate person with responsibility for your particular issues. He or she will make a clear note of the details and will check later to make sure that the matter has been followed up.
3. Any actions or monitoring of the situation that has been agreed will be communicated clearly and we will confirm this in writing to you.
4. If necessary, we will contact appropriate people who may be able to assist us with our enquiries into your concern.
5. We will normally update you on the progress of our enquiries within 10 school days. Once we have responded to your concern, you will have the opportunity of asking for the matter to be considered further.
6. If you are still dissatisfied after following this informal approach, your concern will become a formal complaint and we will deal with it at the next stage.

### **Stage One - formal consideration of your complaint**

This stage in our procedures applies where you are not happy with the informal approach to dealing with your concern, as outlined above.

1. Normally, your written complaint should be addressed to the head teacher. If, however, your complaint concerns the head teacher personally, it should be sent to the school marked "for the attention of the chair of governors".
2. Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.
3. We will acknowledge your complaint in writing as soon as possible after receiving it. This will

be within three school days.

4. We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.
5. The complaint will either be investigated by the head teacher or they may ask a senior member of staff to be the investigating officer. If the complaint is about the head teacher personally, the chair of governors will usually investigate. However, they may appoint another governor to investigate.
6. Normally we would expect to respond in full within 15 school days but if this is not possible we will write to explain the reason for the delay and let you know when we hope to be able to provide a full response.
7. As part of our consideration of your complaint, we may invite you to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any details required. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to help you explain the reasons for your complaint.
8. The head teacher/investigating officer, or chair of governors/designated governor\* may also be accompanied by a suitable person if they wish.
9. Following the meeting, the head teacher/investigating officer, or chair of governors/designated governor will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, we will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question.
10. If the complaint involves a pupil, his/her parent/carer will be contacted and, if interviewed, we will try to ensure the parent/carer is present. In some cases this might not be possible due to the urgency of the matter and a member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable, for example, a learning mentor, will attend the interview.
11. If the complaint is about the conduct of a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law.
12. The head teacher/investigating officer or chair of governors/designated governor will keep dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation.
13. With regards to meetings with yourself or other witnesses, accurate notes will be agreed by both/all parties.
14. In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

15. Once we have established all the relevant facts, we will send you a written response to your complaint. This will give an explanation of the head teacher's or chair of governor's/ designated governor's decision and the reasons for it. If follow-up action is needed, we will indicate what we are proposing to do. We may invite you to a meeting to discuss the outcome as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations with you.
16. If you are unhappy with the way in which we reached our conclusions, you may wish to proceed to stage two, as described below. If you wish to move your complaint to stage two, you should contact us within **10 school days** of receiving our response.

*\*The designated governor will usually be the governor with allocated responsibility for dealing with complaints but may from time to time be another member of the governing body (including the chair of governors)*

## Stage Two

If the complaint has already been through Stage One and you are not happy with the outcome as a result of the way in which the complaint has been handled, you can take it further to a governors' appeal panel. This is a formal process, and the ultimate recourse at school level.

The purpose of this arrangement is to give you the chance to present your arguments in front of a panel of governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the case and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.

However, the aim of a panel is not to rehear the complaint. It is there to review how the complaint has been investigated and to determine whether this has been conducted fairly. It is there to establish facts and make recommendations which will reassure you that we have taken the complaint seriously.

The Governors' appeal panel operates according to the following formal procedures:

1. The governing body will convene a panel of three governors and will aim to arrange for the panel meeting to take place within **20 school days** of receiving your request.
2. The Head Teacher (or whoever investigated at stage one) will be asked to prepare a pack of the documentation related to the investigation and the stage one outcome for the panel. The panel can request additional information from other sources if necessary.
3. You will be informed, at least **5 school days** in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. We hope you will feel comfortable with the meeting taking place in the school, but we will do what we can to make alternative arrangements if you prefer.
4. We will try and arrange the meeting around your availability whilst taking into account all attendees' circumstances. However, if after being offered three separate dates, you cannot agree

to attend, it may be that the meeting will be held in your absence but with written submissions from all parties.

5. With the letter inviting you to the meeting, you will receive any relevant correspondence or reports regarding stage one and you will be asked whether you wish to submit further written evidence to the panel. Any additional documentation should be submitted prior to the review panel meeting.

6. The letter will explain what will happen at the panel meeting and that you are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. The choice of person to accompany you is your own, but it is usually best to involve someone in whom you have confidence but who is not directly connected with the school. They are there to give you support but also to witness the proceedings and to speak on your behalf if you wish.

7. It is not recommended that legal representatives attend: this is not a legal process. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate, for instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

*Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.*

8. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

9. In exceptional circumstances, and if it is necessary in the interests of the ratifying the investigative process, the head teacher/investigating officer may, with the agreement of the chair of the panel, invite relevant witnesses directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting.

10. The chair of the panel will bear in mind that the formal nature of the meeting can be intimidating for you and will do his or her best to put you at your ease

11. As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.

12. The chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. You will receive the written outcome of the panel meeting with the panel's decision. You may also request a copy of the minutes and should make this request at the start of the panel's proceedings.

13. Electronic recording of the meeting is not permitted without the consent of all attendees and only in special circumstances where there are communication difficulties. Agreement must be sought from the chair before the date of the meeting. Any recordings remain private and further sharing is subject to restrictions under the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR).

During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:

- the panel to hear you explain your case and your argument for why it should be heard at stage two.
- the panel to hear the head teacher/investigating officer's case in response.
- you to raise questions via the chair.
- the head teacher/investigating officer raise questions through the chair.
- the panel members to be able to question you and the head teacher/investigating officer; and
- you and the head teacher/investigating officer to make a final statement.

14. In closing the meeting, the chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to you and the Head Teacher **within three school days**. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.

- The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:
- reach a unanimous, or at least a majority decision, to uphold/dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken, if necessary.
- and
- recommend, where appropriate, to the governing body changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.
- The chair of the panel will send you and the head teacher a letter outlining the decision of the panel. The letter will also explain that you are entitled to have the handling of the complaint reviewed by the Secretary of State for Education.
- We will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the school's records but separate from pupils' personal records.

15. If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School will take to resolve the complaint. The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

## Closure of complaints

Very occasionally, a school will feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied.

We will do all we can to help to resolve a complaint against the school but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes. Sometimes it is simply a case of "agreeing to disagree".

If a complainant persists in making representations to the school – to the head teacher, designated governor, chair of governors or anyone else – or to the local authority, this can be extremely time-consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in our care.

For this reason, we are entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint and the complaint has exhausted our official process. The local authority will support us in this position, and especially where the complainant's action is causing distress to staff and/or pupils.

Where you have been through the school's internal complaints procedures and are still unhappy with the outcome or decision from the governing body, you can contact the Secretary of State for Education via the DfE website [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus) , by telephoning 0370 000 2288 or by writing to the address below:

Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Please enclose with your letter to the DfE a copy of the complaint outcome. This will save time in that the DfE will not need to ask for our view of what has happened.

We would advise parents that, unless the school is shown to have behaved unreasonably or not to have followed their own procedures, there is likely to be little further action that can be taken, as governing bodies are empowered to deal with many issues without reference to either the local authority or the secretary of state.

## Campaigns

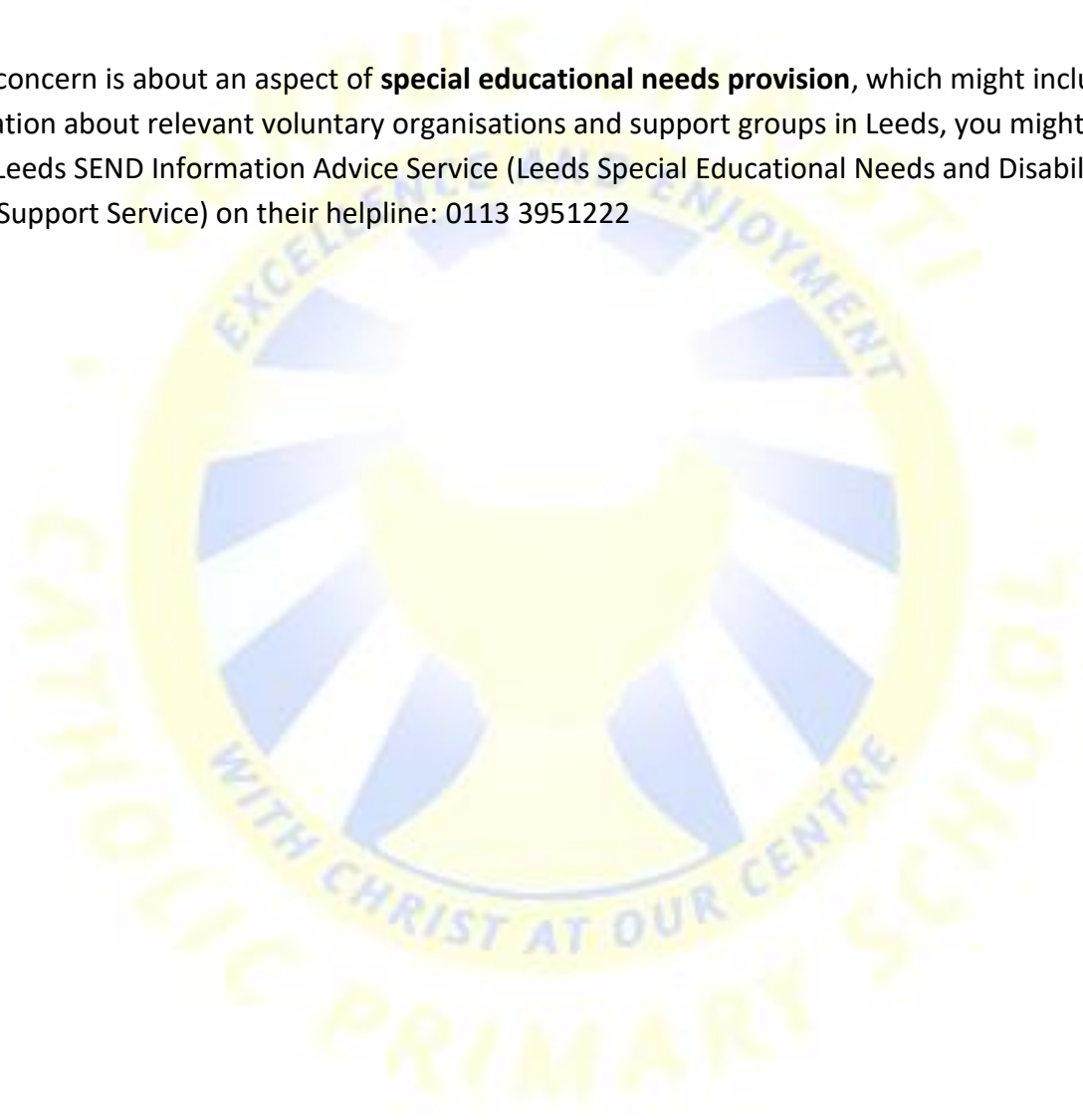
Where we receive numerous complaints from parents and carers and/or other people unconnected with the school regarding a particular issue, we will classify these as campaigns.

These usually concern a high-profile issue that has motivated a number of people to come together and write to the school to express their dissatisfaction.

We will not deal with these under the school's complaint policy. However, we will produce a response to the issue that will be either sent to all correspondents or we will publish a response on the school's website and direct people to it.

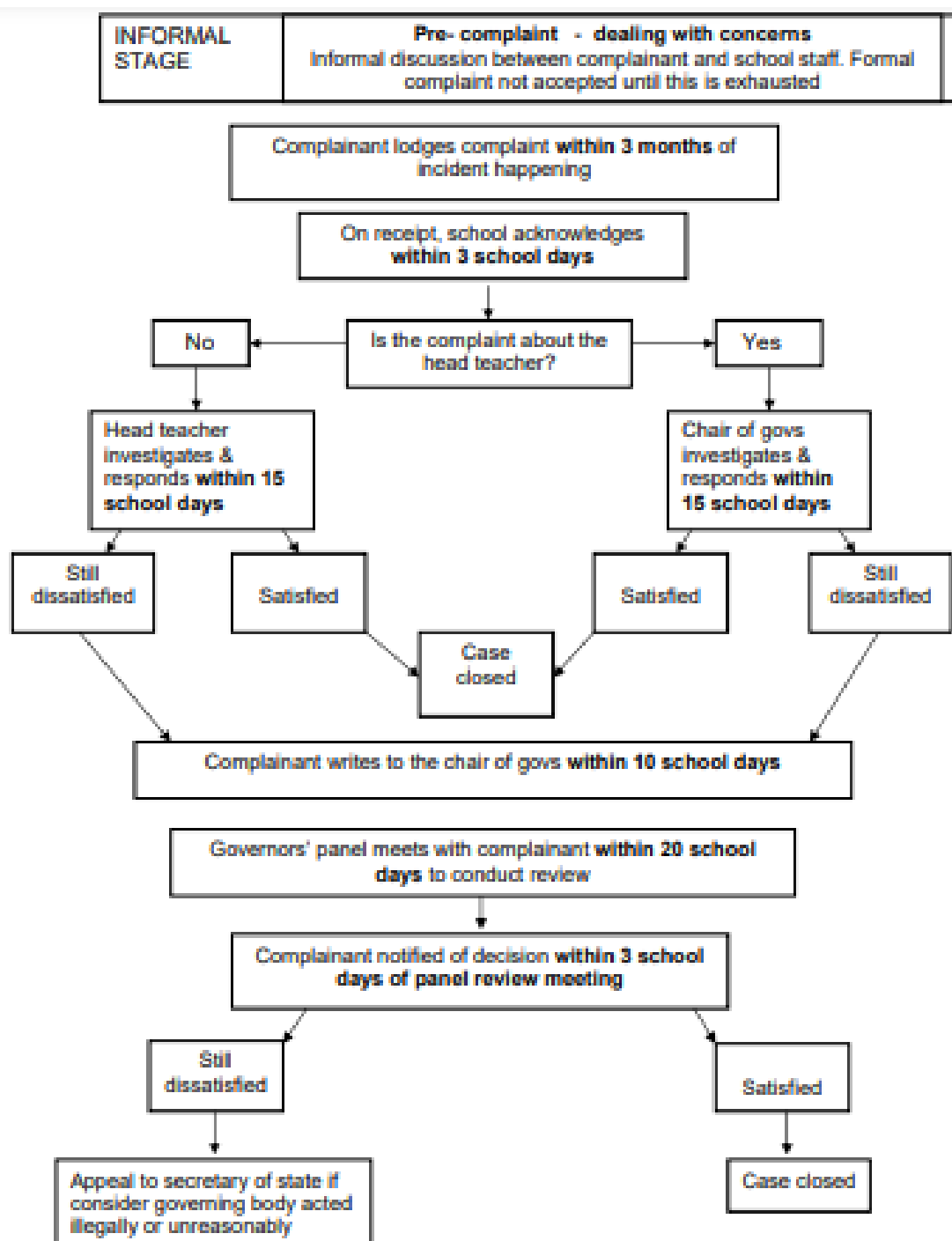
#### Other sources of information and advice

If your concern is about an aspect of **special educational needs provision**, which might include information about relevant voluntary organisations and support groups in Leeds, you might like to talk to Leeds SEND Information Advice Service (Leeds Special Educational Needs and Disability Advice Support Service) on their helpline: 0113 3951222



## Dealing with complaints about schools – flowchart

### Dealing with complaints about schools – flowchart



## Appendix A

### Complaints which are subject to statutory procedures

A complaints procedure should cover all complaints about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides with the **exceptions** listed below, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools	Concerns should be raised direct with local authorities. For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the local authority). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman and Social Care Ombudsman.
• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Contact Leeds City Council special educational needs service Telephone: 0113 3785 256
• School re-organisation proposals	Contact Leeds City Council <a href="mailto:educ.school.organisation@leeds.gov.uk">educ.school.organisation@leeds.gov.uk</a>
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	If you have a concern as a practitioner, please call the Social Care Duty & Advice team on 0113 376 0336 (9am to 5pm) or the Emergency Duty team on 0113 240 9536 (out of office hours)
• Exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at : <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>
• Whistleblowing	Schools have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: <a href="mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk">whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk</a> or by writing to: WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD. The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.
• Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures	These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities.	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service.
• Complaints regarding requests for term time absence	These requests are entirely at the head teacher's discretion. Therefore, they do not come under the remit of the complaints' procedure.

The head teacher will in most cases determine which if any of these statutory procedures apply. Advice can be obtained from the local authority on any such issues either by contacting the appropriate service manager or customer relations on 0113 37 85111.

If one of these statutory procedures needs to be invoked at some point during the investigation of a more general complaint, the complaints procedure should be suspended until the statutory procedure has been concluded.

If a complainant commences legal action against Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School > in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.



Complaints / Feedback form

Personal Details		
Name		
Address		
Postcode		
Telephone number(s)		
Email address		
If applicable, name of child(ren) and year at school	<b>Name of child</b>	<b>Year Group</b>
Your relationship to the school, e.g., parent, carer, neighbour, member of the public, student		
Please give details of your complaint		
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? Who did you speak to, when and what was the response?		
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?		
Signature		
Date		

Official Use	
Date of acknowledgment	
By whom	
Complaint referred to	
Date	

## Annexe D      Model complaint response letter – stage one

Dear Mr and Mrs X,

### Formal stage one complaint regarding X

Thank you for your letter dated.... From your letter(s) it is clear that you are still unhappy with the situation. As a result, I have decided to have the matter investigated as part of formal stage one of the school's complaints procedure.

You complain that:

*summary of complaint to be stated. State each point separately.*

I have completed my investigation and can offer the following response(s) on each of the points you have raised.

1. Concerning your complaint that ....
2. Concerning your complaint that ....

It is important that you are clear about what action the school has taken at each stage of the process so far:

Informal stage

*State what action was taken in response and the outcome of this.*

Formal stage one

*State what investigative action was taken in response and the outcome of this, including any remedial action to be taken if complaint is upheld.*

I hope this response answers your concerns. Please let me know if you wish to meet so I can clarify any points.

In the meantime, if you are still not satisfied with my reply, there is a further stage of the complaints procedure that you can follow. This formal stage two is a review by a panel of governors who will look at the way in which your complaint has been dealt with. The panel will consider the facts of the case but will not, however, rehear the whole case.

To go to the next formal stage, you should write to the chair of governors within 10 school days of the receipt of this letter, giving your reasons why you wish to take your complaint further. If you are still not satisfied with the results of the formal stage two panel of governors, you can complain to the Secretary of State for Education who will consider how your complaint has been handled.

Yours sincerely,

## **Annexe E      Template for letter to invite complainant to stage two panel**

Dear X,

I am writing to confirm arrangements for the stage two panel hearing.

### **Date and time of the meeting**

The meeting will take place on XXXX at XXXX. This meeting is to give you the chance to present your views on the complaint in front of a panel of three governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the case and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.

### **Panel members**

The members of the panel will be:

Member

Member

Member

### **Purpose of the meeting**

The panel will aim to establish facts and make recommendations. They will not be looking to re-investigate the complaint but will review how the complaint has been investigated and determine whether this has been conducted fairly. I should be grateful if you could let me know if you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your complaint; this should be submitted prior to the review panel meeting.

### **Enclosures**

I have included with this letter relevant correspondence and reports regarding the stage one investigation; the panel can request additional information from other sources if necessary.

### **Entitlement to be accompanied**

You are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. The choice of person to accompany you is your own but it is usually best to involve someone in whom you have confidence but who is not directly connected with the school. They are there to give you support but also to witness the proceedings and to speak on your behalf if you wish.

### **Format of the meeting**

The panel will ask you to present your case as to why you are not happy with the investigation of your complaint at stage one. The panel will then ask questions and comment as appropriate through the chair. The investigating officer will then present their case and time will be allowed for questions and comments. If appropriate, the complaint investigator may, with the agreement of the chair of the panel, invite relevant witnesses directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting. As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the

other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new information. The chair of the panel will then sum up the proceedings and allow time for final questions and comments.

### **Minutes of the meeting**

The chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. If you would like to have a copy of the minutes, you should let the chair of the panel know in advance. If the panel is happy for the minutes to be copied to you, the clerk can then be asked maintain confidentiality in the minutes.

### **Outcome of the meeting**

In closing the meeting, the chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to you and the head teacher within three school days. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.

The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:

- reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision;
- recommend to the governing board, where appropriate, changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.

You and the head teacher will be sent a letter outlining the decision of the panel. The letter will also explain that you are entitled to have the handling of the complaint reviewed by the Secretary of State for Education if you remain dissatisfied.

Yours sincerely

Chair of the panel

## Annexe F      Template for final response letter following stage two panel

Dear X,

Thank you for taking the time to attend the meeting on XXXXXX regarding your complaint which can be summarised as follows:

*You are not happy with*

The panel have considered the format and method of investigation, content of letters received and issued and the school complaints policy and procedures. As you are aware the complaint investigator attended the meeting and was asked a number of questions for clarification.

Following consideration, we feel a detailed investigation was/was not carried out, and this was/was not done fairly. Therefore, the decision of the panel is to uphold/overturn/partially uphold the outcome of the stage one investigation.

We would like to thank you for feedback, both in your letter and through your considered contribution during the meeting. The panel will ask the school and governing board to specifically consider:

- recommendation
- recommendation

The panel very much regret how this experience has made you feel and we wish to assure you that XXXXXX school is committed to the XXXXXX e.g. the safety and welfare of all its pupils.

If you remain dissatisfied with the way in which your complaint has been dealt with, and outcomes agreed, you can contact the Secretary of State for Education through the DfE website [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk) or by writing to the following address:

The School Complaints Unit  
Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Yours sincerely,

Chair of the panel