



Mount Carmel

R.C. HIGH SCHOOL



Parents' Complaints Policy

Last review date / name: November 2023 / Mr X Bowers

Next review date / name: July 2024 / Mr X Bowers

A Family of Faith & Learning

The aim of this school is always to work in partnership with parents/carers and the wider community. We are ambitious and want the best for all our pupils but know that the best way to do that is to work closely with all stakeholders, especially parents and carers who look after pupils outside of the school day. We aim to always listen carefully, show empathy, be understanding and act professionally at all times with pupils' best interests at the heart of all we do and the decisions we take.

Therefore, any person, including members of the public, can make a complaint. We try hard to do our best for all our pupils. Your views help us plan for the future. We regularly survey stakeholders' views on a whole range of school matters. We like to know when things are going well but we also want parents/carers to tell us about their worries, concerns or complaints as soon as possible. It is much easier for the school to sort out a recent problem than something that happened some time ago and it is much better to resolve a concern sooner rather than later in order to prevent things escalating and / or festering, so what would ordinarily be small things feel much more serious.

Our commitment to you. We will

- listen carefully to your complaint and ensure we fully understand your concerns.
- investigate your complaint thoroughly, fairly and as quickly as possible.
- deal with your concern or complaint in a professional manner.
- keep you up-to-date with what we are doing.
- apologise if the school has made a mistake.
- tell you what we are going to do to put things right.

What to do first

If you have a concern about anything we do you can tell us by telephone, in person or in writing. If any of these are difficult for you, a friend or advocate can speak to the school on your behalf. Most concerns or complaints will be sorted out quickly either by putting things right or by explaining the school's actions to you.

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. We take our duties under equality law seriously and we encourage any person having difficulty accessing this procedure to contact us immediately in order that reasonable adjustments can be made.

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 the Review Stage of the procedure.

First of all it is best to contact the member of staff involved or your child's form tutor or Pastoral Leader / Assistant Pastoral Leader who will either deal with your issue or pass you on to someone who is more able to help.

Please remember that the beginning or end of the school day can be a very busy time. If you talk to a teacher at these times, for practical reasons, it may not be possible to sort things out there and then. Be prepared for them to make an appointment to see you/to ring you at a more convenient time.

Please also be aware that most of our teachers will be teaching for most of their time in school, so emails may be the best way to contact them.

Alternatively, if you contact the school reception and the member of staff is not available then the message will always be passed on to the relevant member of staff and we will endeavor to contact you back ASAP but certainly within 24 hours.

In considering concerns or complaints, the school will ensure that they are dealt with effectively and with fairness to all parties. We find that the vast majority of concerns can be resolved quickly to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Where a complaint has not been resolved informally, then the formal procedures will be followed. Where your concern or complaint is considered sufficiently complex or serious, the school may choose to investigate formally from the outset.

What is a concern or complaint?

- (a) A concern or a complaint is defined as:
- An expression of dissatisfaction about the conduct/operation of the school.
 - The conduct of actions or lack of actions by a member of staff/the Governing Board/an individual governor.
 - Unacceptable delay in dealing with a matter or the unreasonable treatment of a pupil or other person.
- (b) This procedure does not cover complaints or concerns that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed in the following table, as separate procedure.

These procedures do not cover	Who to contact
Admissions to schools Appeals for schools	Concerns about admissions/appeals, should be raised with Lancashire County Council (Pupil Access Team) Email: ESCPupilAccessCentral@lancashire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 123 6707
Inclusion Service: Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	Concerns about Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, should be raised with Lancashire County Council Tel: 0300 123 6706 Email: enquiries@lancashire.gov.uk
School reorganisation proposals	Concerns about school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Lancashire County Council (School Place Planning Team) Email: schoolplanning@lancashire.gov.uk
Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Email: MASHeducation@lancashire.gov.uk
School Exclusions *	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions .

	<p>Concerns about exclusions should be raised with Lancashire County Council (Pupil Access Team) Email: ESCPupilAccessCentral@lancashire.gov.uk Tel: 0300 123 6707</p> <p>*Complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure. Please refer to the school's behaviour policy which is located on the school website.</p>
Whistleblowing	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to Lancashire County Council or the Department for Education depending on the substance of your complaint www.education.gov.uk/contactus Complaintsandfeedback@lancashire.gov.uk</p>
Staff grievance procedures	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
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 their service. Please contact them direct.
National Curriculum content Early Years Foundation Stage, Statutory Framework Collective Worship, Sex Education	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus
Unauthorised absence fines	Please contact Lancashire County Council Tel: 0300 123 701
Freedom of Information Data Protection (GDPR)	Data Protection Officer at the school and if this remains unresolved the Information Commission Office Tel: 0303 123 1113 Email: dataprotectionfee@ico.org.uk
Functions of the County Council	Complaints and Appeals Team Legal and Democratic Services County Hall Preston PR1 8XJ Tel: 0300 1236701 Email: Complaintsandfeedback@lancashire.gov.uk

1. Anonymous Complaints

The school will always give serious consideration to concerns and complaints that are brought to its attention. However, anonymous complaints will not normally be considered.

2. Unreasonable Complaints

There is a right to raise a complaint against a school and an expectation that the individual will exhaust the school's procedures. If the individual contacts the school again with the same issue, this could be seen as unreasonable, and the school may choose not to respond.

The school should seek advice from Governor Services and their Legal Adviser, prior to taking the decision not to progress the complaint further. The school should not stop responding to a complaint because an individual is viewed as difficult to deal with or asks complex questions. The school may refuse to respond to the subject matter but not the correspondent.

The DfE provide additional guidance in 'Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures' (January 2020 and updated in January 2021).

See: [Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/best-practice-guidance-for-school-complaints-procedures)

3. Roles and Responsibilities of the Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible;
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint;
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint;
- ask for assistance as needed;
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect and
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

The school / governing board would in most cases hope to resolve concerns and complaints at an informal stage, but the procedures allow for formal consideration of a complaint and a review stage if matters cannot be resolved.

The school is committed to dealing with complaints as speedily as possible and would plan to complete each stage within 20 school days. From time to time, it may not be possible to complete the process in that timescale. Where it is not possible, the complainant will be informed of any delays.

Where complaints are made against an individual member of the school staff or a governor, the individual will be informed of the complaint at the earliest opportunity and be given the opportunity to respond to ascertain their views on the matter at the informal stage of this policy and certainly before any formal investigation commences.

4. Making a Complaint

Type of Complaint:	Contact the:
Something that has happened or failed to happen in school	Class teacher
The actions of a class teacher	The Headteacher via the school
The actions of the Headteacher	Chair of Governors via the school
The actions of the Chair of Governors	Vice- Chair of Governors via the school
The actions of a governor	Clerk to the governing board via the school

The Complaint Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Stage

The school will seek to resolve complaints informally by email, telephone call, an on-site meeting as appropriate. If the complaint is unable to be resolved at this stage, the school will ask you to put your concerns or complaint in writing and the 'Formal Stage' of the procedures will commence from the date that the letter / complaint form is received by the school. Please email your complaint to the Headteacher's PA cmunroe@mountcarmelhigh.lancs.sch.uk or admin@mountcarmelhigh.co.uk.

If the school has not heard from you within 20 school days, it will assume that you do not want to take things any further and the complaint will be closed.

For concerns regarding the Headteacher, the complainant should put the complaint in a sealed envelope marked 'private and confidential' and addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school. Under Data Protection legislation, the school is not permitted to provide the personal details of the Chair of Governors, but the school will forward the envelope to the Chair as soon as possible.

Stage 2 - Formal Stage

This stage will commence when the:

- Informal complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- Or
- Complainant has indicated they wish to go straight to the formal stage.
- Or
- School feels that the complaint is inappropriate for an informal resolution.

The Headteacher will formally acknowledge receipt of the complaint and ensure the complainant receives an up-to-date copy of the school's Complaint Policy and Procedures.

The Headteacher will review the complaint and ensure a full understanding of the grounds of the complaint are understood.

The Headteacher will also establish what the complainant feels would put things right if it is not clear in the correspondence.

The Headteacher will investigate the grounds of complaint and gather appropriate information from staff involved.

The Headteacher will respond to the complaint in writing and if appropriate meet in person to hopefully resolve the complaint.

Note: If there are reasonable grounds it is acceptable for someone else to submit the complaint on behalf of the complainant with their knowledge and consent.

The Headteacher will seek advice, as appropriate. (Dependent on the nature of the complaint, this could include: the Clerk to the Governing Board; Legal Services; Schools' HR Team; the School's Adviser; the Schools' Finance Officer; Pupil Access Officer or other appropriate Lancashire County Council Officer.)

The Headteacher will inform the member of staff (or governor) if the complaint concerns them and provide them with a copy of the complaint and the school's Policy and Procedures.

The Headteacher will arrange and complete a full investigation of the complaint.

The Headteacher will prepare a report following the investigation; consider whether the complaint is substantiated or unsubstantiated and consider what actions may need to be taken.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant in writing of the outcome of the investigation.

Stage 3 - Should the Complaint Remain Unresolved

When a complaint remains unresolved, the complainant can request a review by the Chair of Governors. This request must be emailed to john.halshaw@govsupport.co.uk the Clerk to the Governing Board. This must be received within 20 school days of the notification from the Headteacher.

The request must be in writing, setting out the grounds as to which matters remain unresolved and include any relevant documentation.

A review by, or meeting with, the Chair of Governors can only take place once the complainant has met with the Headteacher, and the formal complaint is unresolved.

Complainants cannot take their concerns directly to the Chair of Governors without the formal stage of the complaint's procedure taking place.

Note: If the Chair of Governors does not hear from the complainant within 20 school days of the notification of the outcome of the investigation, the complaint will be closed.

The Headteacher/Chair of Governors should make a record in the Complaints Register of the complaint and its outcome. This record may need to be updated by the Chair of the Review Committee in due course. The Complaints Register should be available for Ofsted Inspection purposes.

Stage 4 – Complaints Review Committee

In exceptional circumstances where the complaint has not been resolved by the Headteacher/Chair of Governors, a meeting of the Complaints Review Committee will be arranged to review the complaint. The request must be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Board via the school. The request for the review must clearly set out the matters which remain unresolved.

The Clerk to the Governing Board will acknowledge receipt and will convene the Complaints Review Committee. It is not expected to take more than 20 days to convene but the Clerk to the Committee will update the complainant as appropriate.

The Clerk will request copies of written evidence and will circulate the papers at least 5 working days before the Committee meets. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it.

When a request for the meeting to be recorded is received, this must be with the Clerk in advance of the meeting taking place. The consent of all parties concerned must be obtained. The request and the decision will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

The Committee will:

- Consist of 3 governors who have no prior knowledge of the complaint.

- With the Clerk, prepare an agenda and invite the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors, (as appropriate) and the complainant to the meeting.

Note: It is the responsibility of the Headteacher/Chair of Governors and the complainant to secure their own witnesses and neither party can dictate who the other party brings.

- Consider the written materials.
- Consider the complaint and the Headteacher's (or Chair of Governor's) action.
- Seek advice and support as necessary.
- Consider the oral evidence provided at the meeting.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. 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.

At the end of their review, the Complaints Review Committee will:

- Determine whether to dismiss or uphold the appeal in whole or part.
- Where upheld, decide on recommendations that should be reported to the Governing Board by the Chair of the Review Committee.
- Advise the Headteacher/Chair of Governors (as appropriate) and complainant of their findings.
- Advise the complainant of any further action they may wish to take if they remain dissatisfied.

Following the review, the Chair of the Committee will arrange for the school Complaints Register to be amended to include a brief summary of the complaint and the findings of the Complaints Review Committee. In addition, the Chair of the Committee will ensure that the matter in general terms and any recommendations be reported to the Governing Board.

This concludes the school's Complaints Procedure.