



## Sacred Heart School

# Complaints Policy and Procedure

*At Sacred Heart School we all aspire to provide a happy, safe and secure environment in which every child is encouraged to achieve their full potential.*

*This policy is applicable to all pupils, including those in EYFS.*

*This policy is available to parents via the website and printed copies are available on request.*

Written by:	Johanna Collyer- Headteacher
Approved by:	Sarah Alcock, Antonia Gabriel, Emma Nixon and Karen Whiley- Senior Leadership Team
Last reviewed on:	September 2025
Review date:	September 2026
Review Cycle:	Annually

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE STATEMENT

In line with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 and the Children Act Regulations (October 2005, HMI 2573) we are asked to provide parents at the school with a written Complaints Procedure. This procedure applies to pupils in the Main School and in the Foundation Stage and is outlined below.

At Sacred Heart School we place a high priority on forming positive relationships. We aim to be fair and transparent in our dealings with all members of the school community. We recognise that from time-to-time problems may arise and our aim is always to address matters promptly and seek a swift and mutually agreeable resolution. Most matters can be dealt with quickly and informally; others will require investigation and sometimes consultation to resolve. This policy may only be used by parents of current pupils.

The process for dealing with all concerns relating to your child's education is set out below. You can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint you raise in good faith.

### Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- Any problem or concern should be raised in the first instance with the Class Teacher, who will make every effort to resolve your problem promptly at this informal stage. Such concerns might include homework, lost property or progress and assessments. If your concern is with the teacher, speak directly to the Head Teacher. Most concerns can best be resolved through informal discussion, although it may be necessary to book an appointment in order to avoid interruption to teaching time and other duties.
- The Head Teacher, a member of the Senior Leadership Team or specialist teachers i.e. the SENDCO are always available to informally discuss matters which require attention beyond that of the class teacher.

**Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days of the concern being initially raised, or if the Class Teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, the parents should proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.**

### Stage 2: Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved informally or you are dissatisfied with the response, parents should submit their formal complaint in writing to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher may, in some circumstances, deem it appropriate to nominate another senior member of staff to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process.
- The Head Teacher will speak with the parents within a reasonable time frame, normally within 5 working days, and will seek to find a resolution. It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations. If so, these will be completed within 10 working days, or as soon as practicable. The Headteacher (or her nominee) will determine who will carry out the investigation. If additional time is needed to gather information for the investigation, the parent will be informed in writing.
- Written records will be maintained of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headteacher (or her nominee) is satisfied that all relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. In most cases, this

will occur within 15 working days of the complaint being submitted in writing. In times of school closure, this period may be extended.

- If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed, with any reference to the Headteacher (or her nominee) being replaced by the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to handle the complaint against the Headteacher.

**If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.**

### **Stage 3: Panel Hearing**

- If parents wish to invoke Stage 3, following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, they should put their concerns in writing to the Chair of Governors within five working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.
- If parents are unable to submit their complaint within the stipulated time-period due to extenuating circumstances, they should request an extension in writing. This should be made to the Chair of Governors in advance of the deadline, specifying the additional time needed and the reason for the request. The request will then be considered.
- If parents are unable to submit their complaint within the stipulated time-period (including any agreed extensions), the school reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not advance the matter to stage 3.
- The Chair of Governors will refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three members who were not previously involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The Panel will consist of at least one Governor and one member who is independent of the management and running of the school (for example: serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background or retired members of the Police Force). The panel hearing will normally be arranged within twenty working days of your written request to invoke Stage 3.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may request additional details of the complaint or any related matter to be provided before the hearing or may require further investigation. Copies of these details must be supplied to all parties no later than five working days before the hearing.
- Parents may attend the hearing and may bring one other person if they wish. The Stage 2 decision-taker is also entitled to bring one other person, who may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not appropriate, and companions should not be lawyers. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- The remit of the Panel is at the discretion of the Chair of Governors, and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaints immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

- After due consideration of all relevant facts, the Panel will determine whether the Stage 2 decision was reasonable and decide whether to:
  - dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
  - uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
  - make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents within 10 working days of the hearing to inform them of the decision. Additional time may be required if further investigations are necessary after the hearing. In times of school closure, this period may be extended.
- The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's finding and recommendations (if any) will be sent to the parents via electronic mail or delivered otherwise, and where relevant, to the person complained about, the Chair of Governors and the Stage 2 decision-maker.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage**

- Written complaints relating to the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and complainants notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.
- For parents of pupils in the Foundation Stage, complaints may also be referred to Ofsted Early Years or Independent Schools Inspectorate (*see addresses below*) if you feel the school is not fulfilling the EYFS requirements.

### **Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints**

- It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as quickly as possible; the School aims to resolve Stage 1 and 2 within twenty working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within an additional thirty working days.
- Please note that, for the purpose of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, as published on the school's website, excluding Bank Holidays and school holidays. This means that during School holidays, it may take longer to resolve a complaint.

### **Persistent Correspondence or Complaints**

- The Procedure should be used as a mechanism for resolving issues in good faith and in a courteous manner. It should not be used in an abusive, threatening or vexatious manner.
- Once the complaint is made by a parent and while it is being addressed under the Complaints Procedure, we request that the parent refrain from repeated correspondence or contact with staff members that may be considered vexatious.
- A complaint may become unreasonable if the parent:
  - Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been through the School's Complaints Procedure;
  - Did not proceed with the complaint within the stipulated time frame in this policy;
  - Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive;

- Knowingly provides false information;
  - Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure;
  - Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refused to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out;
  - Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on;
  - Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time;
  - Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.
- We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:
    - We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns.
    - We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options.
    - The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience and / or he or she is making substantially the same points each time.

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

## Recording Complaints

- A written record will be kept of all complaints, actions taken and outcomes regardless of whether they were upheld and whether they are resolved at Stage 2 (formal) or Stage 3 (panel hearing). A copy of these findings and recommendations will be retained by the school for a period of 7 years and the full findings and recommendations will be sent to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. This record will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Head and the Chair of Governors.
- Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, or where the School is required to share information relating to a child protection concern or to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

**The number of formal complaints registered during the year 2024 - 25 was one.**

Independent Schools Inspectorate  
CAP House  
9- 12 Long Lane  
London  
EC1A 9HA

Telephone 020 7600 0100  
e: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

OFSTED Early Years  
Picadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Telephone 0300 123 4666  
e: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)