

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING



**ST. URSULA'S
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

COMPLAINTS POLICY PROCEDURE

*"With God at the heart of our St Ursula's family, we welcome all as we
learn and grow together"*

Autumn 2026

Our Complaints Policy is in line with the DfE/Ofsted/Parentkind Parent guide to school complaints (published in 2026), which gives parents clear steps to share their views and resolve issues quickly and positively. This guide can be found through the following link: <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/assets/parents-resources/Parent-Guide-to-School-Complaints.pdf>

The difference between a concern and a complaint

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

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

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

There are 3 steps to our complaints procedure:

Informal - discussion with the class teacher or with other members of staff who may be the object of the complaint.

Stage 1- Completion of complaints form, investigation and response within 15 school days.

Stage 2 - Governing Body's complaints panel to review the process followed by the School.

Informal stage:

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest opportunity. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of our complaints procedure. St Ursula's takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

As already stated, most parental concerns can be adequately resolved informally, through a discussion with the class teacher or with other members of staff who may be the object of the complaint. There will be no need for the complaint to be put in writing, which would formalise matters.

In the case of serious concerns, it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team.

If an informal approach has not been successful and the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint, detailed below:

Stage one

If you are not satisfied with the response received from the informal stage, you should put your complaint in writing, using the Complaint Form (Pages 9-10). Formal complaints must be made to the head teacher (unless they are about the head teacher), via the school office.

Although you may address your concern to the head teacher, complaints may be referred to another staff member. The member of staff may be Senior member of staff but does not have to be. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is more important.

The Complaints Form seeks to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The complaint form should include details, which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.

The Complaint Form will ask, "What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint?" If it is determined that appropriate steps have not been taken—such as addressing the issue informally—you will be advised to first discuss your concerns with the class teacher or relevant member of staff who may be the subject of the complaint.

On receipt of your Complaint Form you will receive an email confirming receipt and confirmation formal stage has commenced and informed that an investigation has begun. You will normally receive a final response within 15 school days of sending your complaint. An investigating officer will be appointed:

During the investigation, the investigator will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, you will be provided with a formal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. This may be to the effect that:

- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld.
- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence.
- The concern was substantiated in part or in full (some details may then be given of action the school may be taking to review procedures but details of any disciplinary procedures must not be released).
- The matter has been fully investigated and appropriate procedures are being followed, which are strictly confidential.

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 St Ursula's Catholic Primary School will take to resolve the complaint. Please be aware that responses will not include any confidential personnel matters such as disciplinary action taken against staff.

The formal written response will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed in Stage One.

Complaint about Headteacher

If a complaint is about the head teacher or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or vice-chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions above at stage one. Please address the complaint to the Chair of Governors.

Receipt of complaints – Time Scales

Complaints sent on the day before a school break will not be shared with the member of staff until the first day back, therefore the 15 days will begin on this day

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the next school day.

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

If the head teacher/investigator is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

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 during the actual procedure.

Stage two

If you are not happy with the manner in which the process has been followed then you may ask the Governing Body's complaints panel to review the process followed by the Headteacher. Any such request must be put in writing within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome from the Headteacher, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to following procedure

A meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure. These meetings are primarily face to face; however, can be held virtually top support accessibility.

A request to escalate to stage two must be made to the clerk, via the school office, within 10 school days of receipt of the stage one response. The clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the stage two request. If this is not possible, the clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide among themselves who will act as the chair of the complaints committee. If there are fewer than three governors from St Ursula's Catholic Primary School available, the clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their local authority's governor services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at stage two.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making its decision it will be sensitive to the complainant's needs. If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 10 school days before the meeting, the clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. 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 one 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. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented.

The committee can:

- uphold the complaint, in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld, in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The chair of the committee will provide the complainant and St Ursula's Catholic Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days. The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school.

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice chair or the entire governing body or the majority of the governing body, stage two 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 St Ursula's Catholic Primary School will take to resolve the complaint. The response will also advise the complainant

Requests for meetings from parents

Meetings with senior leadership team will be arranged in accordance with this complaints procedure above. To ensure fair and timely consideration for all families, parents and carers should follow the stages set out in this policy when raising a concern or formal complaint; staff will not be expected to accept ad hoc demands for immediate meetings that bypass our established procedures. Where a parent indicates that a matter is urgent and relates to the safety or welfare of a child, the school's safeguarding procedures will be followed and an appropriate member of staff will respond without delay.

Use of AI to draft a complaint

Raising a concern with us is important and we will listen and act. To help us investigate quickly and fairly, please tell us what happened in your own words. We ask that you do not use AI tools (for example ChatGPT) to write complaints. AI can change the tone, add things that didn't happen and may send personal information to other systems. If writing is difficult, you can call the school so a member of staff can note or write the complaint details.

Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints

St Ursula's Catholic Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

St Ursula's Catholic Primary School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact St Ursula's Catholic Primary School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods

of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from St Ursula's Catholic Primary School.

Persistent correspondents

If complainants frequently contact the school, causing a significant level of disruption, but refuse to engage with the complaints procedure, St Ursula's Catholic Primary School will:

- restrict the complainant to a single point of contact via an email address; and/or
- limit the number of times the complainant can make contact.

This restriction will be limited to the complainant's capacity to complain. For all other issues the complainant can contact the school as normal.

St Ursula's school policies have been approved and electronically signed via our Governor Hub. If you require a signed paper copy please contact the school office.

St Ursula's Catholic Primary School Complaint Form

Your Name	
Relationship with school	
Pupil's name	
Pupil's Year group & Class	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	

Please give details of your complaint, [including dates, names of witnesses etc...], to allow the matter to be fully investigated:

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You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional paperwork, if you wish. If you have already provided information it would be helpful if you could summarise the main points above. Number of Additional pages attached =

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? [i.e. whom have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?]

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Signature:

Date:

School use:

Date form received:

Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by:

Complaint referred to:			
Date:			