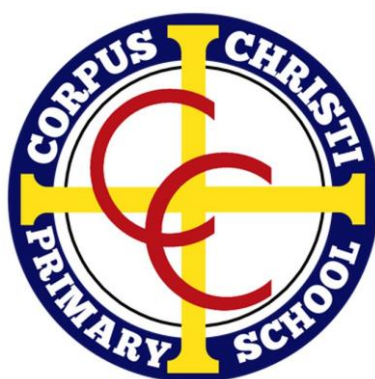


Corpus Christi Catholic Primary & Nursery School



Complaints Policy

Chair of Governors	Mr Ben McMullen
Headteacher	Gregory Hale
Date adopted: October 2026	Review Date: October 2028

'Guided by the light of Christ we grow, learn and shine together.'

Complaints procedure

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Corpus Christi Catholic Primary & Nursery School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

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 however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’*.

It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Corpus Christi Catholic Primary & Nursery School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, Corpus Christi Catholic Primary & Nursery School will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Corpus Christi Catholic Primary & Nursery School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Informal resolution is encouraged where appropriate, but a complainant who wishes to make a formal complaint may proceed directly to Stage 1. A child will not be disadvantaged because their parent or carer has raised a concern or complaint.

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.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to Mr Ben McMullen (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help 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.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Corpus Christi Catholic Primary & Nursery School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admissions to schools• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs• School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with St. Helens Council.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>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).</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure. The school's Behaviour Policy is available from the school office..</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff may be raised through this complaints procedure. Allegations requiring disciplinary action will be considered under the school's separate disciplinary procedures where appropriate. The complainant will be told that the matter is being addressed and receive an appropriate response to their concerns, but confidential disciplinary outcomes will not be disclosed. Safeguarding allegations follow the safeguarding procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

Complaints about special educational needs and disabilities

Complaints about the support provided by the school for a pupil with SEND, including delivery of support specified in an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), may be made through this

complaints procedure. Families may first discuss concerns with the class teacher or SENCO, but this is not a condition of making a formal complaint. Complaints about the headteacher must follow the route to the Chair of Governors.

Decisions about statutory EHC needs assessments, the contents of an EHCP and matters carrying a right of appeal to the SEND Tribunal are subject to their own procedures. The school will explain the relevant route and signpost families to St Helens Council and the local SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS), as appropriate. Where a complaint contains both school and local authority issues, the school will address the aspects within its responsibility and explain how other aspects can be raised. This procedure does not replace statutory appeal rights or extend their deadlines.

If a complainant commences legal action against Corpus Christi Catholic Primary & Nursery 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.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Corpus Christi Catholic Primary & Nursery 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.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The headteacher, or the governor responsible where the complaint concerns the headteacher or a governor, will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge it in writing within 5 school days.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or 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 the investigation, the headteacher or governor responsible will provide a formal written response within 20 school days of receipt of the complaint. The response will address each substantive complaint, explain the findings and reasons, and identify any appropriate action and escalation route.

If the investigation cannot be completed within 20 school days, the person responsible will explain the reason for the delay in writing, give a revised response date and provide progress updates at least every 10 school days until a response is issued.

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 & Nursery School will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, 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 at Stage 1.

Complaints about the headteacher should be made to the Chair of Governors and to the Clerk to the Governing Body if the complaint is about the Chair of Governors or member of the governing body, via the school office marked CONFIDENTIAL.

If the complaint is:

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

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – 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.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 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 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 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 amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Corpus Christi Catholic Primary & Nursery School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA'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 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring a friend, relative or other supporter. With the complainant's consent and agreement on how the meeting will be conducted, the supporter may help present the complaint or speak on their behalf. Reasonable adjustments and interpretation needs will be considered in advance. Legal representation is not normally encouraged because this is a non-adversarial process, but may be appropriate in particular circumstances.

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.

Complaints about staff will be considered through this procedure where appropriate. If allegations require consideration under staff disciplinary procedures, the school will explain which aspects are being handled through that separate process. The complainant will receive an appropriate response to their concerns and any relevant school-level remedial action, but confidential employment information and disciplinary sanctions will not be disclosed. Safeguarding allegations will be referred through the safeguarding procedures where required. The school will explain any effect on complaint timescales and the route available for any remaining complaint about the school's actions.

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**. Complainant, school staff or governors may not submit other written material after this time without an adjournment being called to allow all parties to read and digest the written materials in advance.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 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 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. If the committee hears the parties separately, each party will have a fair opportunity to respond to relevant evidence and points raised by the other, subject to necessary privacy and safeguarding restrictions. The Chair will arrange this through questions, written responses or an adjournment where necessary. The committee will consider the substance of the complaint afresh, including relevant evidence and the Stage 1 findings. Electronic recording is not normally permitted unless agreed in advance, including where needed as a reasonable adjustment. The consent of all participants will be sought and recorded in the minutes.

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

The Clerk will provide the complainant with the approved minutes of the hearing, with necessary redactions to protect confidential information, as soon as practicable after approval. All parties will be informed of any delay.

- 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 Corpus Christi Catholic Primary & Nursery School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Corpus Christi Catholic Primary & Nursery 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 2 will be heard by a committee of independent, co-opted 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 & Nursery School will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Corpus Christi Catholic Primary & Nursery School. They will consider whether Corpus Christi Catholic Primary & Nursery School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Complaint records and learning

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that a secure record of each formal complaint is maintained. Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the appointed governor and Clerk will manage the record independently. Records will include the complaint, relevant evidence, meeting and telephone notes, correspondence, findings, outcome, escalation and agreed actions. Access will be restricted to those who need it for their role.

Complaint records will be retained and securely disposed of in accordance with the school's approved records retention schedule and data protection policies. The school will record the applicable retention period and review date for each file; records will not be kept longer than necessary, subject to safeguarding requirements or any requirement to preserve evidence for ongoing proceedings. Requests for access will be considered under applicable information and data protection law, with appropriate protection for third-party information.

The Governing Body will receive anonymised information about complaint themes, outcomes and completed improvements. Details of live complaints will not be shared with governors who

may be required to sit on a complaint panel. The policy will be reviewed by October 2028, or sooner if legislation, guidance, school status or learning from complaints requires it.

Persistent contact and unreasonable behaviour

The school recognises that people may be distressed when raising concerns. Persistence, disagreement with an outcome or criticism of the school does not in itself make a complaint unreasonable. Each complaint will be considered on its merits, and new substantive issues will be considered through the appropriate stage. Restrictions will not be used to prevent a complainant completing the complaints procedure.

Where contact involves threats, abuse, harassment or excessive repeated communications that materially obstruct the handling of the complaint or the school's work, the Headteacher, or Chair of Governors where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, will consider a proportionate response. Before restrictions are imposed, the school will normally explain the concern in writing, identify the behaviour that needs to change and offer an opportunity to change it. The school will consider disability, communication needs and reasonable adjustments. Immediate protective action may be necessary in response to threats or a serious safety risk.

Any restriction will be explained in writing, with reasons, its scope, duration, a review date and how to request a review by an impartial governor. Measures may include a named contact, agreed contact times or use of one communication channel. An accessible route for submitting complaint evidence, requesting escalation and communicating urgent safeguarding or pupil-welfare matters will remain available. Restrictions will be reviewed within three months, or sooner if circumstances change, and removed or varied when no longer justified.

After the procedure is complete, the school may stop responding to repeated correspondence about the same issues where no new substantive information is provided. It will first confirm that the local process is complete, explain its decision and signpost the external escalation route. Duplicate complaints will be checked for new issues before any decision not to reinvestigate. If an organised campaign produces substantially identical complaints, the school may use a standard response while considering distinct issues separately and protecting personal information.

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Mr G. Hale (Headteacher), Mr Ben McMullen (Chair of Governors), or the Clerk to the Governing Body, as appropriate, via the school office. They will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. Complaints about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors; complaints about the Chair or other governors should be addressed to the Clerk. Please mark correspondence Private and Confidential.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

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

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Roles and Responsibilities

1.1.1 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
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

1.1.2 Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
 - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

1.1.2.1 **Complaints Co-ordinator** *(this could be the headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)*

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information
 - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person

- keep records.

1.1.3 Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

1.1.4 Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made

- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

1.1.5 Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests. The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.