



Ss John Fisher and Thomas More  
Roman Catholic High School

# Complaints Policy

Compiled by: P Dugdale	Date: September 2025
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## 1 Introduction and Scope

Ss John Fisher & Thomas More RC High School is committed to working in partnership with parents, carers and the wider community. We welcome compliments and feedback and we want to hear about concerns or complaints as soon as possible so that they can be resolved

quickly. Anyone — including members of the public — can use this complaints procedure unless the matter is covered by a separate statutory process (see section 4).

This policy has been compiled in accordance with section 29 of the Education Act 2002 and the best-practice guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE). The school will publish this policy on its website, review it regularly and make it available in alternative formats on request.

## 2 Our commitments

We will:

- **Treat all complaints seriously and professionally.** We recognise the difference between a *concern* (an expression of worry or doubt over an issue) and a *complaint* (an expression of dissatisfaction about an action taken or lack of action). We will make every effort to resolve concerns informally wherever possible.
- **Investigate complaints promptly, fairly and impartially.** Most concerns can be resolved within **5–10 school days** at the informal stage. If a complaint progresses to a formal investigation, we will write to you with the outcome within **20 school days** or explain why more time is needed.
- **Communicate clearly.** We will acknowledge written complaints completed on our complaints form within **2 school days** and keep you informed of progress. We will explain what action has been taken and apologise if we have made a mistake.
- **Offer reasonable adjustments.** Complaints should be completed using the complaints form at the end of this policy. We will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate complainants who require support (for example, providing translators or accessible formats).
- **Learn from complaints.** We keep a complaints register and report anonymous summary information to the governing body so that the school can improve its services.

## 3 Roles and responsibilities

### Complainants

Complainants are asked to:

- Make the school aware of concerns as soon as possible.
- Be clear about the nature of the complaint and the outcome they are seeking.
- Work with us to resolve the matter. Aggressive, abusive or unreasonable behaviour will not be tolerated.

### Staff and governors

- **Staff** will listen to concerns, seek to resolve them informally and refer complainants to the next stage if needed. Staff will take brief notes of conversations and keep them securely.

- **Headteacher:** investigates formal complaints at Stage 2 unless the complaint is about the headteacher.
- **Chair of governors** (via the clerk): investigates formal complaints about the headteacher at Stage 2.
- **Governing body complaints committee:** hears Stage 3 review requests. Committee members will have had no prior involvement in the complaint.
- **Clerk to the governors:** coordinates the process, arranges hearings and keeps records.

#### 4 Issues not covered by this policy

Some issues must be dealt with under separate statutory procedures. If your complaint relates to any of the matters below, please use the indicated process instead:

Issue	Who to contact / process
<b>Admissions and appeals</b>	Contact Lancashire County Council Pupil Access Team (email: ESCPupilAccessCentral@lancashire.gov.uk, tel: 0300 123 6707).
<b>Statutory assessments of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)</b>	Contact Lancashire County Council SEND Team (email: enquiries@lancashire.gov.uk, tel: 0300 123 6706).
<b>School re-organisation proposals</b>	Contact Lancashire County Council School Place Planning Team (email: schoolplanning@lancashire.gov.uk).
<b>Child protection / safeguarding</b>	Such complaints are handled under our safeguarding policy. You may contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (email: MASHeducation@lancashire.gov.uk).
<b>Exclusions</b>	See the government guidance on school exclusions ( <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a> ) and contact the Pupil Access Team for concerns.
<b>Whistleblowing (concerns by staff)</b>	Staff should use the school's internal whistleblowing procedure. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for whistleblowers who do not want to raise matters with the employer (visit <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a> ).

Complaints about staff grievances, staff disciplinary procedures, third-party providers using school facilities, or collective worship are also outside the scope of this policy.

#### 5 Complaints procedure

The procedure has three stages: **Stage 1 – Informal resolution**, **Stage 2 – Formal investigation**, and **Stage 3 – Review panel**. Complaints should normally be raised within **three months** of the event giving rise to them. Complaints made later than this may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

### 5.1 Stage 1 – Informal resolution

1. **Raise the concern** with the member of staff involved, your child's class teacher or form tutor/head of year. You may do this in person, by telephone, in writing or by email. Please be mindful that it may take a few days to be able to book an appointment with a member of staff.
2. **Resolution:** The staff member will listen, take brief notes and seek to resolve the issue by explaining actions taken or putting things right. They may refer you to a more senior colleague if appropriate. We aim to resolve most concerns within **5 school days**.
3. **If unsatisfied:** If you are not satisfied or the matter is complex, you may proceed to Stage 2. You should submit a written complaint using the complaints form at the end of this policy within **20 school days** of receiving the Stage 1 response. If we do not hear from you within **20 school days**, we will close the complaint.

**Note:** Complainants should not approach individual governors at this stage. Governors must remain impartial so that they can sit on a review panel if required.

### 5.2 Stage 2 – Formal investigation

1. **Submit your complaint** to the headteacher (or, if the complaint is about the headteacher, to the chair of governors via the school office, marked "private and confidential"). A complaint form is available at the end of this policy. Please state what outcome you are seeking.
2. **Acknowledgement:** We will acknowledge receipt of your written complaint within **2 school days** and provide a copy of this policy.
3. **Investigation:** The headteacher (or chair of governors) may delegate the investigation to an appropriate senior member of staff. They may seek advice from the local authority, HR or other professionals. The investigator will speak with all relevant parties and keep written records.
4. **Outcome:** We aim to complete the investigation within **10 school days**. You will receive a written response stating whether the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, any actions taken to resolve the issue and any recommendations for improvement. If we require more time, we will write to you with the reason for the delay and the revised timeframe.

### 5.3 Stage 3 – Review panel

1. **Request a review:** If you are not satisfied with the Stage 2 outcome, you may request a review by writing to the clerk to the governors within **20 school days** of the decision letter. You should state the grounds on which you believe the complaint remains unresolved and include any relevant documentation.
2. **Panel composition:** The clerk will convene a complaints review committee of **three governors** who have had no prior involvement in the complaint. Where necessary, governors from another school may be invited to ensure impartiality.

3. **Documentation and meeting:** The clerk will request and circulate all written evidence **5 school days** before the meeting. The meeting will normally be held within **20 school days** of the request. You may be invited to attend and may be accompanied by a relative or friend. Legal representation is discouraged unless a school employee is called as a witness.
4. **Decision:** The committee will decide whether to uphold the complaint in whole or in part and may make recommendations to the governing body. The chair of the committee will write to you, and to the headteacher or chair of governors as appropriate, outlining the decision. This concludes the school's procedure.

## 6 Additional provisions

### 6.1 Withdrawal of a complaint

A complainant may withdraw a complaint at any time. We will ask you to confirm this in writing.

### 6.2 Role of the local authority or diocesan/Church authority

Schools are self-managing and responsible for administering their own complaints procedures. If you contact the local authority or diocesan authority, they will direct you back to the school. The school may seek advice and support from the local authority or diocese when investigating complaints.

### 6.3 Social media

Complainants are reminded not to post defamatory or harassing comments about individual staff or governors on social media. Concerns should be raised through the procedures outlined in this policy.

### 6.4 Time calculation

All references to "days" in this policy mean **school days**; weekends, public holidays, INSET days and school holidays are not included.

### 6.5 Duplicate complaints and serial complaints

If, after a complaint has been closed, we receive the same complaint from a spouse, partner or other family member, we will inform them that the process is complete. We will consider new issues separately. Where a complainant raises the same or similar issues repeatedly, we may apply our policy on serial or unreasonable complaints.

## 7 Next steps

Once the school's procedure has been completed, complainants who believe the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably, or not followed its published procedures, may contact the Department for Education. The DfE will not reinvestigate the substance of the

complaint but will consider whether the school has complied with legal requirements.  
Contact details:

**Department for Education – School Complaints Unit**

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street,

Manchester M1 2WD

Telephone: 0370 000 2288

Online: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)

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# Complaints Form

Title: Mr/Mrs/ Ms/Dr/Other\*  
(\*please supply)

Surname

Forename(s)

Landline  
number:

Address  
and

Mobile  
number:

Postcode:

Email  
Address:

How would you  
prefer us to  
contact you?

Pupil name  
(if relevant)

Your relationship to pupil  
(if relevant)

Please give details of your complaint and how you have been affected:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint?

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

When did you first become aware of the problem?

If it is more than 3 months since you first became aware of the problem, please give a reason why you have not complained before.

Are you attaching any documents to this complaint? Yes/No

Signature of complainant:

Date:

Signature if you are making a complaint on behalf of someone else

Signature:

Date:

Please state your relationship with the complainant and why you are making a complaint on their behalf:

**FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY:**

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date: