Trinity School

Complaints Policy

Date of Document: June 2025
Review date: June 2027

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Based on the Department for Education's Best Practice Guidance (January 2021)
This policy supports the school's commitment to Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 and reflects the Department for Education's non-statutory guidance on effective complaints handling.

Our Vision and Values

At the heart of our school community, we are committed to:

- Leading excellence in Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision
- Ensuring outstanding, person-centred achievement and outcomes
- Including everyone in a meaningful, safeguarded life

We value our pupils and their families. We are dedicated to their safety, education, personal development, and inclusion. (For our full Vision, Values and Aims, please visit our school website.)

If we fall short of these values, we welcome the opportunity to listen, learn, and improve through your feedback.

Purpose of This Policy

This policy outlines how you can raise a concern or complaint about the school or the services we provide. We aim to:

- Be impartial, respectful, and non-adversarial
- Conduct fair investigations, involving independent individuals or panels where appropriate
- Provide timely, effective responses
- Maintain confidentiality and treat all parties with courtesy
- Ensure decisions are lawful, fair, and proportionate
- Keep you informed throughout the process
- Use feedback to support school improvement

We encourage early, informal resolution wherever possible and will always ask what outcome you are seeking.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to any individual, including members of the public, who wish to raise a complaint about the school's services or facilities, unless a separate statutory process applies (e.g. admissions, exclusions, SEND assessments).

Exclusions from this policy include:

- Staff grievances or disciplinary matters
- Admissions and exclusions
- Statutory SEND assessments
- School reorganisation proposals
- Whistleblowing
- Services provided by third parties using school premises

SEND Complaints
Complaints about the school's SEND support are covered by this policy. However, complaints about the content or process of an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan will be referred to the Local Authority, in line with the SEND Code of Practice.

Definitions

- **Concern:** An expression of worry or doubt for which reassurance is sought
- **Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction about an action taken or a lack of action

Complaints can be raised in person, in writing, or by telephone, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

How to Raise a Concern or Complaint

Informal Stage
Most concerns can be resolved informally by speaking directly with the relevant member of staff. You can do this via letter, phone, or by arranging a meeting.

For serious concerns, please contact the Headteacher directly. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, contact the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governing Body.

Formal Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Formal Complaint
If the issue is not resolved informally, you may submit a formal complaint:

- In writing, or
- Verbally (a written record will be made)

Submit to:

- The Headteacher, or
- The Clerk to the Governing Body (if the complaint is about the Headteacher)

You may use the Complaint Form (Appendix 1).

Meeting
You may be invited to a meeting to clarify your concerns. You are welcome to bring a friend or representative.

Outcome
You will receive a written response within 5 working days of the meeting.

Stage 2 – Investigation
If unresolved, the school will:

- Confirm next steps within 5 working days
- Conduct a thorough investigation
- Provide a written outcome within 10 working days of the initial response (15 working days total)

(Complex cases may take longer; you will be kept informed.)

Stage 3 – Appeal to Governing Body Panel
If you remain dissatisfied, you may request a review by a panel of governors.

Submit a Review Request Form (Appendix 3)

- A panel will meet within 10 school days of receiving your request
- You will receive a written outcome within 5 school days of the panel meeting

Record Keeping and Confidentiality
All complaints and their outcomes will be recorded and stored securely. You may request access to these records under the Freedom of Information Act or Data Protection legislation.

Monitoring and Review
This policy will be reviewed annually. If a complainant's behaviour becomes persistent or unreasonable, the school may apply its Vexatious Complaints Policy (June 2025).

Escalating a Complaint to the Department for Education (DfE)

If a complaint has been fully addressed through the school's procedures and the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may refer the matter to the Department for Education (DfE). The Secretary of State will consider whether the governing body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and whether it is appropriate to intervene. The DfE's role is to review how the school handled the complaint, rather than to reinvestigate the original issue.

Complaints can be submitted to the DfE using their online form: https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe

Duplicate Complaints

If the school receives a duplicate complaint (the same issue raised by a different individual) and no new information is provided, we will inform the complainant that the matter has already been addressed and the local process is complete. They will be advised to contact the DfE if they remain dissatisfied.

Complaint Campaigns

If the school receives a large number of complaints on the same subject from individuals not directly connected to the school, we will investigate the issue in line with this policy and issue a standard response to all complainants. We may also publish a single response on the school website, with guidance from the local authority's communications team. Complainants will be advised to contact the DfE if they are not satisfied with the school's response.

Persistent or Serial Complaints

In rare cases, a complainant may remain dissatisfied despite all stages of the complaints procedure being followed. In such cases, the school is not obliged to respond to repeated attempts to reopen the same issue. The Chair of Governors may write to the complainant to confirm that the matter is now closed at school level. This does not prevent the complainant from referring the issue to the Secretary of State for Education, who will make an independent judgment.

Monitoring Complaints

The Governing Body will monitor the number and nature of complaints on a termly basis. To maintain impartiality, complaints shared with the full Governing Body will not include names or identifying details, in case a panel needs to be convened for an appeal. The Senior Leadership Team will use complaints data to identify areas for improvement and enhance the quality of services provided.