



The Blessed Peter Snow
Catholic Academy Trust



Complaints Policy

The Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust Mission Statement:

The five strands in our mission help us journey closer to Jesus. Through scripture and the sacraments, we are guided in our mission to provide opportunities for each person to have life and have it to the full.

Our pupils, staff and communities:

- Are encouraged to discover more about who they are within a supportive Catholic environment, so that by making our journeys together all may catch a glimpse of God
- Show respect and acceptance of each other, so that all feel welcomed and are thus prepared to take their place in a just and caring society
- Have the freedom and safety to find, recognise and celebrate all the gifts and talents, opportunities that lead to happiness
- Through knowing and celebrating success in all its forms during their time with us, lay the foundations for a successful life outside our Academies
- Thrive and grow in their work and learning, inspired to show curiosity and independence of thought

“God’s glory is seen in a human being who is fully alive; and that life is truly full when the person catches a glimpse of God”

St Irenaeus (c.130 – 200)

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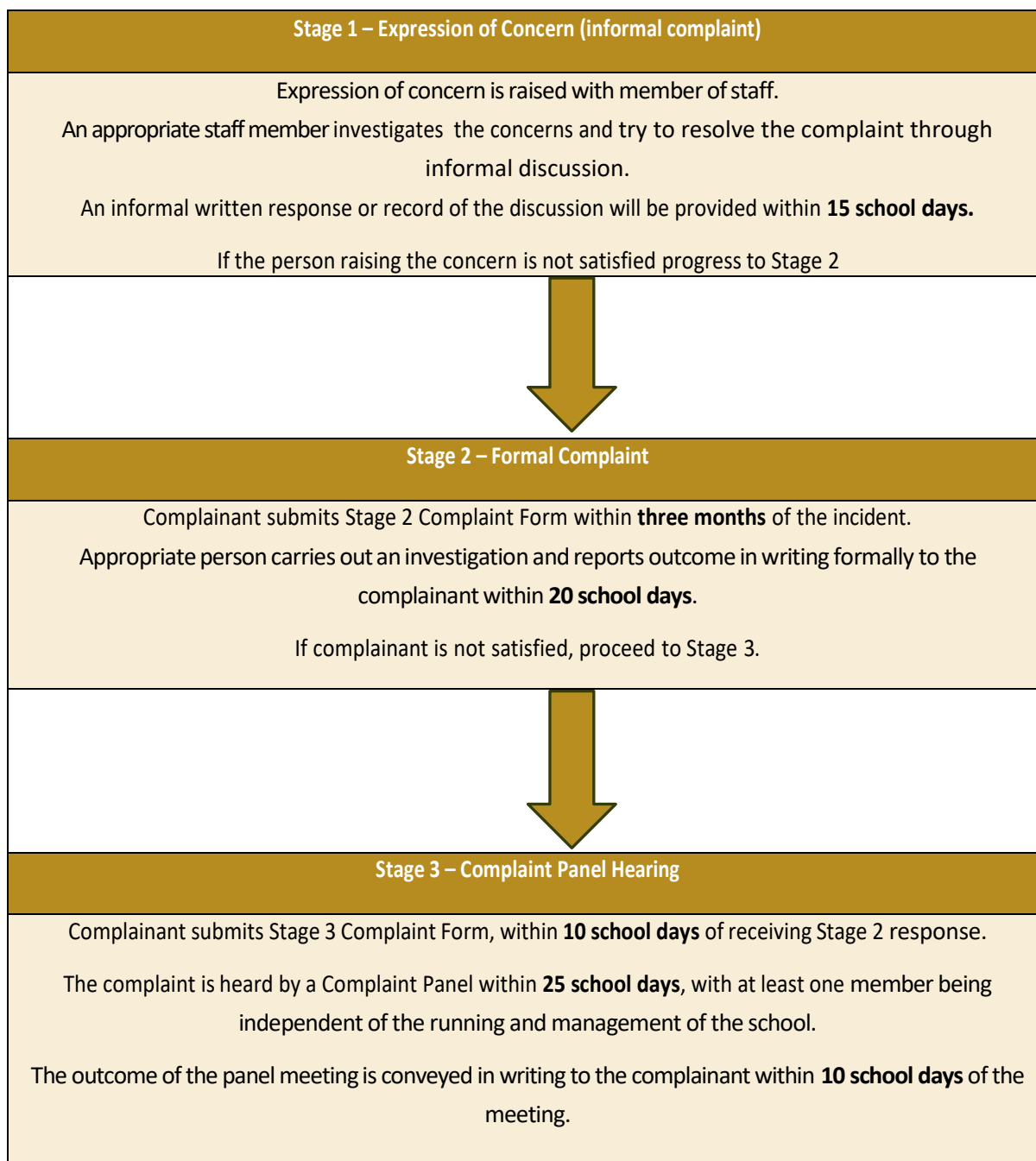
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1. Procedure for Dealing with Complaints

Each stage should be completed before progressing to the next stage.



There is no further right of appeal. If a complainant is not satisfied with the handling of their complaint, they may contact the **DfE**, via its online portal at gov.uk/complain-to-dfe

2. Introduction

The Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust (BPSCAT) is under a duty to comply with the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. This Complaints Procedure is based on guidance published by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

The Academy Trust and school values good home/school relations and will do what they can to establish and maintain them. This includes seeking to resolve concerns or complaints promptly and the satisfaction of all concerned.

Feedback on what parents feel the school does well, or not so well, as a school is welcomed. The school will consider carefully all feedback, whether positive or negative, and will review policies and practices, accordingly, making changes if necessary.

All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and courteously, and parents will be advised of the school's procedures for dealing with their concerns. The school expect

parents and other complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the school community. In particular, any disagreement with the school should not be expressed inappropriately or in front of pupils.

Definition of a Parent

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' as:

- All natural (biological) parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person;
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

Closure of Complaints

Whilst the school will seek to resolve concerns and complaints to the satisfaction of all parties, it may not be possible to achieve this in every case. In exceptional circumstances, we will use our option to close a complaint before all stages of the complaints procedure have been exhausted in which circumstances reasons will be given in writing.

There is also a procedure in place for unreasonable or persistent complaints, which is referenced later in this policy.

Who can make a complaint?

As this Complaints Policy is based upon [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#) it only applies to complaints from parents / carers of pupils at the school, regarding their child.

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the school. Complaints made

by persons who do not have a registered pupil at the school will be investigated and responded to as judged appropriate by the head teacher but are not subject to this complaints procedures.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered 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 for parents to decide whether the issue is suitable for using the complaints procedure. It will be worth asking the question 'Is this a concern or complaint?' The answer to this question should help the parent know how best to deal with the issue. Whatever, the answer parents should aim to deal with issues as informally as possible; ideally face to face with a member of staff at the appropriate time.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The 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, the Headteacher 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, the 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.

Concerns or complaints should initially be discussed with the relevant school employee or representative, for example the class teacher, year head/subject head or Headteacher.

There is no need at this stage for the concern or complaint to be made in writing, however the employee or representative will make a note of any agreed actions which will be retained as a record. An informal written response will be provided within 15 school days.

Complaints about school staff (except the Headteacher) must be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the school office. Contact details may be found on the school's website. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher must be made to the Chair of Academy Council, via the school office. Contact details may be found on the school's website. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Academy Council, any individual Governor or the whole Academy Council must be made to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Trust Board must be made to the Vice-Chair of the Trust Board. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Trust Central Team must be made to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a Director of the Trust (except Chair of Trust Board), must be made to the Chair of Trust Board. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the whole of the Trust Board must be made to the Trust Head of Governance. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, template complaint forms are included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the relevant form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation for example Citizens Advice, to help you.

Complainants should state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage.

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 Academy Council, 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.

Complaints not in scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints from parents, relating to their child, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the relevant local authority. Please refer to published guidance
- Statutory assessments of - special educational needs	Local Authority carrying out the assessment.
Safeguarding and Child Protection Investigations	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under the school's Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). For contact details, see the school's Safeguarding Policy, which is published on the school website.
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions . <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the Trust's complaints procedure.</i>
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, Governors and Directors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus .
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the Trust's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the Trust's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed

• Data Protection and related matters	Complaints about our compliance with Data Protection legislation, how we have handled personal data, Freedom of Information and Data Subject Access Requests will be dealt with in line with our Trust Data Protection Policy.
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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. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against the school/Trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Third Parties

Complaints relating to suppliers or groups using our premises or facilities should be directed to the supplier or group.

Special Educational Needs

Concerns about special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision by parents should initially be raised with the school's SENDCo in the first instance so we can work together to find a resolution. If the matter is not resolved, complaints about SEND provision should then be made following this complaints policy.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the 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 acceptance 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

Social Media

Complaints are dealt with confidentially and complainants are expected to observe confidentiality regarding the detail of their complaint. Complainants are respectfully requested not to discuss complaints publicly outside of the complaints process including via social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp groups with other parents and X etc.

Should defamatory or inappropriate comments be posted on social media, steps may be taken to report matters to the appropriate authorities.

Withdrawal of a complaint

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

Serial or Persistent Complaints

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant makes the same complaint or asks the school to reopen the same issue, the school is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant writes again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be recognised as 'serial' or 'persistent' and there will be no obligation on the part of the school to respond. It is important to note however that, should the complainant raise an entirely new, separate complaint, it must be responded to in accordance with the complaints procedure.

The procedure for dealing with unreasonably persistent complaints is as below:

Deciding whether a complaint should be deemed an unreasonably persistent complaint

The Headteacher, with the agreement of the Chair of the Academy Council, may deem a complaint as unreasonably persistent.

For the purposes of this policy an “**unreasonably persistent complaint**” is defined as follows:

An unreasonably persistent complainant is a person who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that he/she considers to be within the remit of the academy and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:

- *actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious; and/or*
- *prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint; and/or*
- *an insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes beyond all reason*
- *complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance*
- *demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value*

The Headteacher will ensure there is sufficient evidence available to justify the decision.

Action to be taken where a complaint is deemed as unreasonably persistent

- The Headteacher will write to the complainant to explain the decision and the way that future complaints will be dealt with. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate.
- Some or all of the following actions may be taken, depending on particular circumstances of the case:
 - implementation of a tailored communication strategy, if an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption regardless of whether or not they have raised a complaint, a tailored communication plan may be implemented. For example the plan could:
 - restrict the individual to a single point of contact via an email address
 - limit the number of times an individual can make contact, such as fixed number of contacts per week, half term or term
 - insisting that no member of staff should meet the individual on his/her own;
 - merely acknowledging correspondence from the individual that raises issues that have already been dealt with;
 - application of the Zero Tolerance Policy, which may lead to the individual being banned from the school premises.

However, all correspondence from the complainant will be considered and any new and substantive issues will be addressed and a reply sent to the complainant.

New complaints from people who have submitted persistent complaints will be treated on their merits.

3. Stages of the Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure is divided into three stages, as follows:

- Stage 1 - Expression of Concern (informal complaint) – expression of concern is raised with member of staff. This stage aims to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in school.
- Stage 2 – Formal Complaint – complaint is raised formally, within 3 months of the incident, to the Headteacher (or Chair of Academy Council if the complaint is about the Headteacher). This is the first formal stage at which complaints are considered by the appropriate investigator.
- Stage 3 – Complaint Panel Hearing – is the final formal stage of the complaints procedure. It involves a complaints panel hearing.

Stage 1 – Expressions of concern (informal complaints)

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.

Concerns should be raised with the relevant employee, for example the class teacher, year head/subject head or Headteacher. Persons raising concerns should not approach individual Governors or Directors 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 or 3 of the procedure.

Resolution discussions are expected to take place and the appropriate person investigating the concern will provide an informal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the expression of concern.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Stage 2 – Formal complaints

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person or in writing (preferably on the Stage 2 Complaint Form).

The Headteacher (or designated member of staff) will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **5 school days**.

Within this acknowledgement, the Headteacher (or designated member of staff) will seek clarification of any further information it is felt is required in addition to that already submitted. For example, the Headteacher may 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 staff or an external investigator 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 their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within **20 school days** of the date of receipt of the complaint.

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

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 the 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 2.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the Academy Council (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled Governor or external investigator will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

Complaints about the Headteacher must be made to the Chair of the Academy Council via the school office.

Complaints about a member of the Academy Council (including Chair or Vice-Chair) must be made to the Complaints Administrator via the school office.

If a complaint about a school is made to the Trust Office, receipt will be acknowledged and it will be forwarded to the relevant school to handle in line with this complaints procedure.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair of the Academy Council, or
- the entire Academy Council, or
- the majority of the Academy Council

Stage 2 will be escalated to the CEO of the Trust who will instigate an investigation.

Stage 3 – Complaint Panel Hearing

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a panel hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. This means that the independent Complaint Panel member will not be a Director or an employee of the Trust. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Complaints Administrator, via the school office, within **10 school days** of receipt of the Stage 2 response. This may be done in person or in writing (preferably on the Stage 3 Complaint Form).

The Complaints Administrator 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 Complaints Administrator will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the panel meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within **25 school days** of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Complaints Administrator will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Chair of the Complaint Panel 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.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Academy Council, or;
- the entire Academy Council, or;
- the majority of the Academy Council.

The Stage 3 Complaints Panel will comprise at least three persons. The Complaints Panel will usually be made up of:

- 1 Governor who serves on the Academy Council of the relevant academy.

- 1 Director who serves on the Trust Board: and
- 1 Independent Person who is not involved with the management or running of the academy.

In the event of a Director not being available, independent panel members will be used. The Headteacher must attend the complaints panel meeting.

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend and the complainant must provide their name to the Complaints Administrator in advance of the meeting. We do not allow either party to bring legal representatives to the complaints panel meeting.

If a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union representation. The complaint panel will consider the appropriateness of any witnesses requested. A written submission may be requested of the witness in advance of the panel meeting.

The complainant and school are responsible for ensuring that their supporters and witnesses are aware of the date, time and location of the complaint panel meeting.

The complaint panel wishes to hear from those directly involved in the complaint matter therefore supporters will not normally be invited to speak or ask questions during the panel meeting, unless agreed by the panel.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under (Human Resources) staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least **8 school days** before the meeting, the Complaints Administrator 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 complaint panel at least **6 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 complaint panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The complaint panel 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. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not 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.

During the meeting the complainant can expect there to be opportunities for:

- the panel to hear you explain your case and your argument for why it should be heard.
- the panel to hear the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- the complainant and Headteacher to be questioned and raise questions.
- the panel to ask questions of the complainant and Headteacher.
- the complainant and Headteacher to make a final statement.

Complaint panel meetings are expected to last up to 2 hours in total, which should allow sufficient time for the complaint and responses to be heard. It will be assumed that all documentation has been read by all parties in advance of the meeting therefore maximising the use of meeting time.

The complaint panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel 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 panel 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 Complaint Panel will provide the complainant and the school with a full explanation of the panel's 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 Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school.

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 the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.

Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

A written record will be kept by the school of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Complaints about the Trust Central Team, CEO or a Director

If a complainant wishes to complain directly about the Trust Central Team, then the complaint should be sent to the CEO to be investigated.

The CEO (or designated member of staff) will write to the complainant acknowledging the complaint within **5 school days** of the date that the written request was received. The acknowledgement will confirm that the complaint will now be investigated under Stage 2 of this Complaints Policy and will confirm the date for providing a response to the complainant.

Following the investigation, the CEO will write to the complainant confirming the outcome within **20 school days** of the date that the letter was received. If this time limit cannot be met, the CEO will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

If the complaint concerns the CEO or a Director, the complaint should be investigated by the Chair of the Trust Board. If a formal complaint form is received about the Chair of the Trust Board, the complaint will be referred to the Vice-Chair of the Trust Board for investigation.

NB. Where the Chair of the Trust Board has investigated the complaint, they will write the letter of outcome to the Complainant and provide a copy to the CEO.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the previous stage, the complainant should write to the Trust Head of Governance within **10 school days**, for the complaint to be heard before a Complaint Panel. This may be done using the Stage 3 Complaint Form.

The Trust Head of Governance 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 Trust Head of Governance (or designated member of staff) will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within **25 school days** of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Trust Head of Governance will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Chair of the Complaint Panel 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.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair of the Trust Board, or
- the entire Trust Board, or
- the majority of the Trust Board

Stage 3 will be heard by a completely independent committee panel.

The Complaint Panel will consist of three members. None of the three members of the Complaint Panel will have been involved in the incidents or events which led to the complaint or have been

involved in dealing with the complaint in the previous stages, or have any detailed prior knowledge of the complaint.

One of the Complaint Panel members will be independent of the management and running of the Academy Trust. This means that the independent Complaint Panel member will not be a Director or an employee of the Trust.

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend and the complainant must provide their name in advance of the meeting. We do not allow either party to bring legal representatives to the complaint panel meeting.

If a Trust employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union representation. The complaint panel will consider the appropriateness of any witnesses requested. A written submission may be requested of the witness in advance of the panel meeting.

The complainant and CEO/Director are responsible for ensuring that their supporters and witnesses are aware of the date, time and location of the complaint panel meeting.

The complaint panel wishes to hear from those directly involved in the complaint matter, therefore supporters will not normally be invited to speak or ask questions during the panel meeting, unless agreed by the panel.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least **8 school days** before the meeting, the Trust Head of Governance (or designated member of staff) 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 complaint panel at least 6 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 complaint panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The complaint panel 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. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not 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 complaint panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel 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 panel will:

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

The Chair of the Complaint Panel will provide the complainant and Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust 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 Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the Trust.

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 the Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school/Trust premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher, where appropriate.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

4. Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school/Academy Trust did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education (DfE) via its online portal at [gov.uk/complain-to-dfe](https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe) after they have completed Stage 3.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school/Trust. They will consider whether the school/Academy Trust has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

The complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE online at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe>

Monitoring and Review of this Policy

The Trust Board shall be responsible for reviewing this policy from time to time to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Stage 2 Complaint Form

Please complete this form, return via the school office and await an acknowledgement receipt within 5 school days. The form should be completed and submitted within 3 months of the incident for the complaint to be considered.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number: Email address:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it and their response.

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 who:
Complaint referred to:
Action taken:
Date:

Stage 3 Complaint Form

If you are not satisfied with the response received from the investigation of your complaint at Stage 2 and wish to escalate the complaint to a panel hearing, then please complete this form and return it to the school office. The form should be completed and submitted within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response for the complaint to be progressed

Your name:
Date Stage 2 response received:
Please give details of why you are not satisfied with the Stage 2 response. Please provide any further details that you would wish to share with the Complaints Panel hearing your complaint
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to Chair of Complaint Panel:

Date:

Roles and Responsibilities

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.

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 panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The Headteacher or complaints panel will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator

(this could be the Headteacher or CEO/designated complaints Governor or Director 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, CEO, Chair of Academy Council, Chair of Trust or the Complaints Administrator 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.

Complaints Administrator

The Complaints Administrator is the contact point for the complainant and the complaint panel and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaints 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 panel 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.
- arrange a Clerk to the complaint panel meeting.

Clerk to the Complaint Panel Meeting

The Clerk to the Complaint Panel should:

- attend the meeting to take a written record of the proceedings.
- prepare summary minutes which act as an aide memoir for the panel.
- circulate the draft minutes of the meeting as agreed by the complaint panel.
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

Witness

A witness's role is to attend a complaint panel meeting, if invited to do so, to help the panel get a better understanding of the circumstances. The witness should:

- provide their account of the matter which is the subject of the complaint.
- provide information relevant to the complaint matter.
- answer questions relevant to their knowledge of the subject of the complaint.
- provide a written statement in advance of the panel hearing, if requested.

If a witness is unwilling or unable to attend a complaint panel meeting, they should submit a written statement for consideration.

Witnesses who wish to bring forward their own complaints may do so, starting at Stage 1 of the complaint procedure.

Supporter (friend/relative/union representative etc)

A supporter's role is to provide emotional support to the person they are accompanying. The supporter should:

- listen calmly and actively during the panel meeting.
- offer emotional support to the person you are accompanying but do not speak for them.
- respect confidentiality.

If it is clear that a person is not able to present their case, the Chair of the panel may allow the supporter to:

- help the relevant party express their views.
- present on behalf of the relevant party

The Chair of the panel reserves the right to:

- ask a supporter to leave the complaint hearing if they are not fulfilling our expectations of the role set out for them.

Supporters who wish to bring forward their own complaints may do so, starting at Stage 1 of the complaint procedure.

Complaint Panel Chair

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

- both parties are asked (via the Complaint Administrator) 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 complaint panel 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 Data Protection Act 2018 or GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation).
- 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
- without undue interruption 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 panel is open-minded and acts independently.
- no member of the panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.
- both the complainant and school are invited to state whether they feel they have had a fair hearing
- the meeting is minuted.
- they liaise with the Clerk and Complaints Administrator.
- a letter of response is prepared and agreed with panel members
- all parties are notified of the panel's decision including the findings and any recommendations.

Complaint Panel Member

Complaint Panel members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so.
- No Governor/Director may sit on the panel 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 panel 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 panel 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 panel 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 panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.