Complaints and Policy Procedure -October 2026

St. Adrian's Catholic Primary School

'To Learn, To Love, To Live as a Community of God with Christ as our Teacher'

www.stadrians.herts.sch.uk

Approved by:	The Full Governing Body	**Date:** October 2026	
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1. Introduction and Catholic ethos

In a Catholic school, parents' and carers' concerns are of particular importance. As the first educators of their children, parents and carers have a duty to take an active interest in their school.

> *"Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring." (Gravissimum Educationis)*

> *"There must be the closest co-operation between parents and the teachers to whom they entrust their children to be educated. In fulfilling their task, teachers are to collaborate closely with the parents and willingly listen to them." (Canon 796)*

In a Catholic school, therefore, dealing with concerns is an intrinsic part of the school's ethos and mission. St. Adrian's Catholic Primary School seeks to handle every concern and complaint in a way that reflects the dignity of each person, the common good, justice, compassion, truth and reconciliation.

An open organisation will listen to concerns and anxieties and be ready to learn from them where appropriate. Most concerns are likely to be raised by parents or carers, but they may also arise from pupils, former pupils, parishioners, neighbours, visitors or users of the premises. A qualifying complaint will be considered wherever it arises.

Nearly all concerns or questions can be resolved quickly and informally when they are raised promptly with the person best placed to help. Discussion, explanation, additional information or an apology, where appropriate, will often resolve the matter. Every reasonable effort should be made to address concerns with the least formality necessary.

Occasionally, a concern is too serious for informal handling, requires investigation, or remains unresolved. It then becomes a formal complaint and the published procedure must be followed. Even at the formal stages, the school will continue to seek resolution at the lowest appropriate level. It should be exceptional for a matter to require a Stage 2 complaints panel.

All staff and governors must be familiar with this procedure and know the identity of the Complaints Co-ordinator. Advice may be sought from the Diocese of Westminster Education Service and Hertfordshire County Council, where appropriate. Diocesan or local authority representatives may advise on procedure but do not determine the outcome unless formally appointed as an independent investigator or panel member.

2. Guiding principles

In applying this policy, the school will:

- uphold the dignity of every person and treat everyone with courtesy and respect;
- listen carefully and respond with honesty, compassion and fairness;
- seek reconciliation and the restoration of constructive relationships wherever possible;
- act impartially and avoid conflicts of interest;
- protect the welfare and best interests of children;
- maintain appropriate confidentiality and comply with data-protection law;
- make reasonable adjustments so that the procedure is accessible;
- deal with matters promptly while allowing sufficient time for a fair investigation;
- distinguish between dissatisfaction with an outcome and evidence that a process was not followed;
- identify learning and improvements arising from complaints.

Not every complaint will be upheld, and reconciliation will not always be possible. Nevertheless, every qualifying complaint will receive fair consideration in accordance with this published procedure.

3. Who can make a complaint?

This procedure is not limited to parents or carers of pupils registered at the school. Any person, including a member of the public, may make a complaint about facilities or services provided by St. Adrian's Catholic Primary School, provided that the matter falls within the scope of this policy.

When a complaint is received, the school will confirm whether it can be accepted under this procedure. If it cannot, the school will explain why and, where possible, identify the alternative process or organisation that applies.

A third party may act on another person's behalf only where appropriate consent has been established. Extended family members and others who do not hold parental responsibility do not have an automatic right to complain about provision for a child or to receive confidential information about that child. The school may still consider the issues raised and liaise with a person who holds parental responsibility where that is necessary or helpful.

4. Definitions

- A concern is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered important, for which reassurance is sought.
- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action, which requires investigation and a formal written response.
- A registered pupil remains on the school roll until formally removed in accordance with the applicable legal requirements.
- School day means a day on which the school is fully open to all registered pupils. It excludes weekends, school holidays, INSET days and occasional closure days.

The school will determine the appropriate route by considering the substance of the communication rather than the label used by the person raising it.

5. How to raise a concern

Concerns may be raised in person, by telephone, by email or by letter. They may also be raised by a third party with appropriate consent. Concerns will be directed to the person best placed to respond, normally the class teacher, a member of the senior leadership team or the Headteacher.

Where a person finds it difficult to discuss a concern with a particular member of staff, the Headteacher or Complaints Co-ordinator may refer them to another suitable member of staff. Objectivity and impartiality are more important than seniority.

The school will aim to respond to an informal concern within five school days. If that is not possible, the person raising the concern will be advised of the reason and the likely response date. If the concern remains unresolved, the next step is Stage 1 of the formal procedure.

6. How to raise a formal complaint

Formal complaints must be documented in writing and marked 'Private and Confidential'. A complaint may be submitted by email or letter, or by using the form at Appendix 2. If a complainant cannot submit a written complaint, the school will assist them to record the complaint and desired outcomes accurately.

Formal complaints should identify:

- the action or lack of action complained about;
- the relevant dates and chronology;
- the people involved, where known;
- steps already taken to resolve the matter;
- the impact of the matter;
- the outcome sought;

- supporting documents or evidence.

Complaints should be addressed as follows:

- Complaints about school staff, except the Headteacher: to Mrs Porter, Headteacher, via the school office.
- Complaints about the Headteacher: to Martha Moroney, Chair of Governors, via the school office.
- Complaints about the Chair of Governors, an individual governor, the majority of the Governing Body or the whole Governing Body: to Paula Ong, Clerk to the Governing Body, via the school office.

Complainants must not approach individual governors directly. Governors have no authority to act individually and prior involvement may disqualify them from serving at Stage 2.

A formal complaint cannot proceed directly to Stage 2. Stage 1 must first be completed unless the school determines that an alternative statutory or independent process applies.

7. Equality, accessibility and support

In accordance with equality legislation, the school will consider reasonable adjustments required to enable a complainant to access and complete the procedure. This may include accessible formats, assistance to document a complaint, interpretation, accessible venues, virtual attendance or additional support at a meeting.

Complainants may seek assistance from Citizens Advice or an independent advocacy service. POhWER provides free and impartial advocacy support in Hertfordshire. Contact details should be checked before publication and may be added to the school's website or complaint form.

Where a complainant is unable or unwilling to put a formal complaint in writing, the Complaints Co-ordinator will document the school's understanding of the complaint and any desired outcomes and ask the complainant to confirm that the record is accurate.

8. Artificial Intelligence

The school recognises that complainants may use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to assist in preparing correspondence. AI-generated content may contain inaccuracies, unsupported legal references, assumptions or material that does not accurately reflect the complainant's circumstances.

Where a complaint is unclear, contradictory, excessively broad or difficult to distinguish from generic AI-generated material, the school may ask the complainant to clarify the specific issues, relevant facts and desired outcomes before the formal investigation begins. The school will investigate the substance of the complaint, not unverifiable speculation or irrelevant material.

9. Anonymous complaints

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. The Headteacher or Chair of Governors, as appropriate, will decide whether the matter warrants investigation, particularly where safeguarding, serious risk or wider public-interest considerations arise. Because the identity and entitlement of an anonymous complainant cannot be established, the outcome cannot normally be shared with them.

10. Timescales and school holidays

A complaint must normally be raised within three calendar months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents has occurred, within three months of the last incident.

A late complaint will be considered only where the school decides that exceptional circumstances apply. The complainant may be asked to explain the delay. The school may consider the reason for delay, availability of evidence, whether incidents are inextricably linked, fairness to all parties and the seriousness of the matter. If a late complaint is not accepted, the decision and reasons will be confirmed in writing.

A concern or complaint received during a school holiday will be treated as received on the first school day after the holiday. If submitted on the final school day before a holiday, that day counts as day one and the next school day counts as day two.

The timescales in this policy are service standards rather than statutory deadlines. They may be extended due to complexity, absence of a key person, external investigation, independent investigation or delay in receiving relevant evidence. The school will explain any extension and provide a revised date.

If a complainant submits a Subject Access Request or Freedom of Information request during a live complaint and asks the school to delay the complaint pending disclosure, this may extend the complaints timetable.

11. Scope of this procedure

This policy applies to complaints about the provision of facilities or services by the school where no separate statutory, regulatory, contractual or internal process applies.

Examples of matters that may be accepted include:

- pastoral issues, including allegations of bullying;
- pupil welfare and wellbeing;
- the behaviour of a member of staff or governor, subject to any separate employment process;
- SEND provision where a child does not have an EHCP;
- confusing, inaccurate or misleading information;
- alleged failure to follow a school policy or procedure;
- poor communication;
- services or facilities provided by the school.

12. Matters outside this procedure

A person may raise a concern about the matters below, but the formal complaints procedure is not an appeal mechanism against decisions made under another statutory process or against lawful management decisions. Where possible, the school will explain the correct route.

Admissions and school reorganisation: Admission decisions and unsuccessful applications are subject to statutory admission and appeal arrangements. Reorganisation proposals are considered through the applicable consultation and decision-making process.

Suspensions and permanent exclusions: The statutory arrangements and Department for Education guidance apply. Complaints about how the Behaviour Policy was applied may be considered where they do not seek to overturn a suspension or exclusion decision.

Safeguarding and child protection: Matters likely to require a child-protection investigation are handled under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The complaints procedure cannot be used to prevent the school from making a statutory safeguarding or LADO referral.

Whistleblowing: Employees, temporary staff and contractors must use the Whistleblowing Policy. Volunteers may use this complaints procedure where appropriate.

Staff grievances and employment matters: A complaint by a member of staff about another member of staff is dealt with under the staff grievance procedure. Staff conduct concerns may engage disciplinary procedures. A complainant will not be given confidential employment outcomes.

External providers: Complaints about services supplied by third parties using or hiring school premises must be directed to the provider.

National Curriculum content: Complaints about National Curriculum content should be directed to the Department for Education.

Data protection and information rights: Personal-data complaints, data breaches, Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information matters follow the separate process in Appendix 5.

Management decisions: Class allocation, teacher deployment, pupil grouping, volunteer selection, session changes, resource allocation and emergency closure decisions are management responsibilities. Concerns will be heard, but will not normally enter the formal process unless there is credible evidence that a relevant policy, legal duty or decision-making process was not followed.

Attendance coding and term-time leave: These decisions are made by authorised staff using professional judgement and the applicable statutory framework. Clarification may be requested, but the complaints procedure is not a further appeal route against the decision.

Consulted decisions: A decision subject to full consultation and subsequent approval by the Governing Body will not normally be reconsidered through this procedure merely because a respondent disagrees with the result.

Police, court and tribunal matters: The school may decline or suspend consideration of matters subject to past, current or pending police, court or tribunal proceedings where the complaints process would duplicate, prejudice or interfere with those proceedings.

Traffic and parking: Driving and parking on the public highway are the responsibility of motorists and relevant enforcement bodies. The school may address conduct on its premises or matters within its control.

Previously concluded matters: The school is not obliged to reinvestigate the same substantive issue after the applicable complaints or appeal process has been completed, unless significant new evidence is provided.

Communication restrictions and premises access: A person subject to communication-management measures or a premises restriction will be offered a representation and periodic review under Appendix 3. The standard complaints process does not provide a further appeal against that decision.

13. Special Educational Needs provision complaints

Concerns about SEND provision should first be raised with the class teacher, SENCo or Headteacher. Complaints about SEND provision for a pupil without an EHCP may proceed under this procedure.

Where a complaint concerns the availability or delivery of provision specified in Section F of an EHCP, the local authority maintaining the plan has a non-delegable duty to secure that provision. The complaint should therefore be directed to that local authority using its current SEND or corporate complaints arrangements.

For an EHCP maintained by Hertfordshire County Council, the complainant should use the current contact route published by the Council. The school will cooperate with any lawful local-authority review, provision checklist or investigation. Contact details and timescales can change and should be checked before this policy is published.

Disputes about the content of Sections B, F or I of an EHCP, or other matters carrying a statutory right of appeal, must use the relevant mediation or tribunal route.

14. Data protection and information-rights complaints

Complaints about personal-data processing, data breaches, Subject Access Requests, Freedom of Information requests or other information rights are dealt with under the separate process at Appendix 5 and overseen by the school's Data Protection Officer.

Using the data-protection process does not prevent a separate service complaint from continuing where the issues are distinct. The Complaints Co-ordinator and Data Protection Officer will decide the appropriate route and avoid unnecessary duplication.

15. Other investigations and legal proceedings

If the police, local-authority safeguarding teams, a regulator, court or tribunal are considering related matters, the school may alter the timetable or suspend all or part of its investigation until that work is complete. The school will explain the reason and review the position periodically.

If legal proceedings are commenced against the school, the school will consider whether continuing the complaints process would prejudice those proceedings or duplicate issues already before a court or tribunal. After proceedings conclude, the school will consider whether any distinct complaint issues remain to be addressed.

16. Responding to and resolving complaints

At every stage, the school will seek resolution and clarity in a spirit of justice, truth and reconciliation. Where practical, the school will state whether each element of a complaint is upheld, partly upheld, not upheld, or whether there is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion.

Where appropriate, the school may offer:

- an explanation;
- an acknowledgement that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an apology;
- an assurance that the problem will be addressed;
- an explanation of actions already taken or planned, including responsibility and timescales;
- a review of policy, practice, communication or training;
- recommendations intended to prevent recurrence.

An apology or improvement action does not necessarily mean that every part of a complaint has been upheld.

17. Withdrawal of a complaint

A complainant wishing to withdraw a complaint should notify the school as soon as possible. The school will request written confirmation. If the complainant cannot or will not provide it, the school will write to confirm its understanding that the complaint has been withdrawn. The school may nevertheless continue to consider safeguarding, legal, regulatory or significant school-improvement issues arising from the matter.

18. Informal stage: concern

Raising a concern promptly gives the school the best opportunity to understand what happened and respond. The school will ordinarily attempt informal resolution before Stage 1, unless the seriousness or nature of the matter makes a formal investigation appropriate from the outset.

The person considering the concern may speak to relevant individuals, review readily available records and explain the school's position. The target response time is five school days.

19. Stage 1: formal complaint

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher through the school office, unless the complaint is about the Headteacher or a governor. The original receipt date and, where clarification is needed, the date on which the issues and desired outcomes are confirmed will be recorded.

19.1 Acknowledgement and clarification

The school will acknowledge a Stage 1 complaint in writing within five school days. The acknowledgement will confirm the issues understood to be under investigation, seek any necessary clarification and record the outcome sought. The Headteacher may decide whether a meeting, telephone call or written clarification is most appropriate.

19.2 Investigation

The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to a suitable member of staff or independent investigator but retains responsibility for the Stage 1 decision, unless the complaint concerns the Headteacher or Governing Body.

The investigator may:

- meet or correspond with the complainant and respondent;
- interview relevant staff, pupils or witnesses, taking account of safeguarding and the welfare of children;
- allow an interviewee to be accompanied by an appropriate supporter, notified in advance;
- review records, correspondence and relevant policies;
- seek signed and dated statements;
- conduct meetings in person, online or through written representations;
- keep an accurate written record of meetings and interviews;
- identify agreed facts, disputed facts and evidence gaps.

19.3 Stage 1 response

The Headteacher will normally issue the Stage 1 response within 15 school days of receiving the clarified complaint. If this cannot be achieved, the complainant will be given the reason, an update and a revised date before the original timeframe expires.

The response will set out the investigation undertaken, findings on each complaint point, reasons, any actions and implementation timescales, and the route for requesting Stage 2.

19.4 Complaints about the Headteacher or governors

A complaint about the Headteacher or an individual governor, including the Chair or Vice-Chair, will be considered at Stage 1 by a suitably skilled impartial governor. It must be sent to the Clerk through the school office.

A complaint jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair, the majority of the Governing Body or the entire Governing Body will be considered by an independent investigator appointed through the Clerk, Governing Body or Diocese of Westminster. The independent investigator will report findings and any recommendations so that a formal Stage 1 response can be issued.

19.5 Escalation

A request for Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk through the school office within 10 school days of the Stage 1 response. The request should explain why the complainant remains dissatisfied and identify the Stage 1 findings they ask the panel to review. Stage 2 occurs only where a written request is received.

20. Stage 2: complaints panel

Stage 2 is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure. It is a review and hearing of the complaint already investigated at Stage 1, not an opportunity to introduce unrelated new complaints.

20.1 Panel membership

The panel will ordinarily comprise three impartial governors with no prior involvement or knowledge that would compromise independence. If sufficient impartial governors are unavailable, the Clerk may source governors from another school, local authority governor services or the Diocese of Westminster, or arrange an entirely independent panel. The panel members will appoint their Chair in advance.

A Diocesan or local-authority representative may attend in an advisory capacity. They do not vote unless formally appointed as a panel member.

20.2 Acknowledgement and scheduling

The Clerk will acknowledge the Stage 2 request within five school days. The school will aim to convene the panel within 30 school days. Three reasonable dates may be offered. If all are rejected without good reason, the school may select one and proceed on the written submissions if a party does not attend.

20.3 Format of the hearing

The panel may proceed in person, online, through written representations, or by inviting parties separately where necessary. The format will be chosen having regard to fairness, accessibility, safeguarding, wellbeing and the circumstances of the complaint.

The complainant and school representative may each bring a supporter. Legal representation is not encouraged because the hearing is not a court process, but the panel may permit it in exceptional circumstances. No party may cross-question another directly. Questions are put through the panel Chair.

Media representatives are not permitted. Witnesses may be invited and may be accompanied by an appropriate supporter.

20.4 Evidence and panel pack

The Clerk will confirm final arrangements at least 12 school days before the hearing. Further evidence must normally be submitted at least seven school days before the hearing. The panel may refuse late evidence where accepting it would prejudice fairness or require adjournment.

The Clerk will circulate a panel pack at least five school days before the hearing. Relevant third-party personal information will be redacted where required. Witness statements should be signed and dated. Covert recordings obtained without informed consent will not normally be accepted.

The panel will not consider unrelated new complaints. A new complaint must begin at Stage 1. If genuinely relevant new information emerges, the panel may adjourn to allow the parties a fair opportunity to consider it.

20.5 Recording and privacy

The hearing is private. Audio or video recording is not normally permitted. A request based on disability or special need will be considered as a reasonable adjustment, taking account of alternative support such as an official clerk and permission to take personal notes. Any agreed recording will be arranged or controlled by the school and consent will be documented.

20.6 Conduct of the hearing

The Chair will explain the panel's remit, ensure the procedure is fair and non-adversarial, allow each party to summarise its written case, and ensure panel members can ask questions. Children or young people will be supported sensitively and their welfare will remain paramount.

20.7 Findings and recommendations

For each complaint point, the panel may:

- uphold it in full;
- uphold it in part;
- not uphold it;
- make no judgment where there is insufficient reliable evidence to reach a conclusion.

Where any aspect is upheld, the panel may recommend proportionate steps to resolve the matter or improve systems and procedures. Recommendations will be referred to the Full Governing Body, which will endeavour to consider them within five school weeks. Individuals who heard or investigated the complaint may provide information but should not improperly influence the governing body's consideration of recommendations.

20.8 Outcome

The panel Chair will issue a reasoned outcome letter to the complainant and the school's respondent within five school days of the hearing. Where recommendations require Full Governing Body consideration, the initial letter will identify the findings and state that a final implementation letter will follow. The final letter will record approved actions, responsible persons and timescales, and confirm that the school procedure is exhausted.

20.9 Complaints about the Governing Body

A Stage 2 complaint about the majority or whole Governing Body will be heard by an independent panel. The same procedural safeguards, findings and outcome arrangements apply.

21. Complaints involving former pupils

Where a child has left the school and is no longer on roll, a remedy may not directly benefit that child. Nevertheless, the school has a duty to learn and to protect current and future pupils.

Following Stage 1, the Chair of Governors may decide that Stage 2 should be either a full panel hearing or a Governor Review. For a Governor Review, an impartial governor will consider the complaint, Stage 1 investigation and response, escalation request, relevant evidence and policies. The reviewer may meet people or seek statements but is not obliged to repeat work already completed fairly at Stage 1.

The reviewer will provide findings and any actions to the Chair, who will issue the Stage 2 response. The response will explain the findings, reasons, improvement actions and further recourse.

22. Further recourse

After the school procedure is exhausted, a complainant who believes that the school failed to follow its procedure, or acted unlawfully or unreasonably in exercising duties under education law, may contact the Department for Education.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance or replace the panel's judgment merely because the complainant disagrees. It considers whether the school followed relevant legislation and statutory policies.

Current contact details should be checked before publication. At the date of drafting, the published route is the Department for Education customer help portal, telephone 0370 000 2288, or School Complaints Compliance Unit, Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

Ofsted may consider certain qualifying whole-school complaints after the school's procedure has been exhausted, subject to its statutory remit and discretion.

23. Recording, reporting, confidentiality and retention

The Complaints Co-ordinator will keep an accurate record of complaints, stages completed, decisions and actions. Anonymised themes and learning will be reported periodically to senior leaders and the Governing Body. Reports will not identify individuals unless that is necessary for lawful governance oversight.

Complaint records are confidential and will be shared only where there is a lawful and legitimate need. Responses may contain redactions to protect third parties. Rights of access are determined under applicable data-protection law and do not create an automatic entitlement to every internal or third-party document.

Records will normally be retained for three years after completion, unless the school's retention schedule, safeguarding duties, limitation periods, legal advice or another lawful requirement requires a different period.

24. Complaints made outside the procedure

If a complaint is sent to an individual governor, the Diocese, local authority or another person before the correct school stage has been completed, it will normally be redirected to the appropriate point in this procedure. Governors must not investigate or comment individually on matters that may later come before a panel.

25. Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of substantially identical complaints, particularly from individuals unconnected with the school, the Chair of Governors may arrange a standard response or publish a single response on the school website. Individual personal information will not be published.

26. Legal representation

The complaints process is intended to be non-adversarial and restorative, not a substitute for legal proceedings. Legal representatives or advisers will therefore be admitted only where the panel considers that exceptional circumstances justify their involvement and prior written permission has been obtained.

Appendix 1: Roles and responsibilities

Complainant

A complainant will receive a more effective response if they:

- explain the complaint fully and as early as possible;
- identify the outcome sought;
- co-operate respectfully with the procedure;
- respond promptly to reasonable requests;
- provide relevant evidence within the published timescales;
- ask for assistance where needed;
- respect confidentiality and refrain from publicising live complaint details;
- avoid abusive, threatening, discriminatory or disruptive conduct.

Investigator

The investigator establishes the facts through fair, open and proportionate enquiry. They should:

- approach the complaint with an open mind;
- clarify complaint points and desired outcomes;
- decide whom to interview and which records to consider;
- interview sensitively, particularly where children are involved;
- keep accurate notes or arrange an independent note-taker;
- analyse relevant information and applicable policies;
- securely retain investigation material;
- meet applicable timescales or explain delay;
- prepare clear findings and, where appropriate, improvement recommendations.

Complaints Co-ordinator

- maintain oversight of progress and timescales;
- send acknowledgements and updates;
- liaise with the complainant, respondent, Headteacher, Chair, Clerk, Diocese and local authority where appropriate;
- support written clarification and accessibility;
- consider third-party information and redaction;
- maintain secure records and governance reporting.

Clerk to the Governing Body

- act as the principal procedural contact at Stage 2;
- advise parties and panel members of rights and responsibilities;
- arrange the hearing and accessibility;
- collate, redact and circulate the panel pack;
- advise the panel on procedure without determining findings;
- record the hearing and circulate approved notes where appropriate;
- support issue of the outcome and any implementation letter.

Panel Chair

- ensure independence, fairness, courtesy and a non-adversarial tone;
- explain the remit and procedure;
- ensure all parties can present their case;
- direct all questioning and prevent cross-questioning;
- ensure relevant issues and facts are addressed;

- protect confidentiality and the welfare of children;
- lead the panel in making reasoned findings;
- issue the outcome letter with support from the Clerk.

Panel members

- have no prior involvement or conflict of interest;
- read the panel pack carefully;
- remain open-minded and impartial;
- ask relevant, proportionate questions;
- distinguish between findings and recommendations;
- give due weight to the views and welfare of children;
- seek resolution and learning while making decisions based on evidence.

Diocesan and local-authority representatives

Unless appointed as an investigator or panel member, representatives attend in an advisory capacity only. They do not vote or participate in the panel's private decision-making.

Appendix 2: Formal complaint form

Please complete and return this form to the school office, marked 'Private and Confidential'. The Complaints Co-ordinator will acknowledge receipt and explain the next steps.

Your name:

_____

Address and postcode:

_____

Email address:

_____

Daytime telephone number:

_____

Pupil name, if relevant:

_____

Your relationship to the pupil:

_____

Do you hold parental responsibility? If no, attach evidence of consent or authority.:

_____

What is the nature of your complaint? Include relevant dates, people and events.

_____

_____

_____

_____

What steps have already been taken to resolve the concern informally?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What outcome or outcomes are you seeking?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What supporting evidence are you attaching?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Supporting evidence checklist: ☐ Emails ☐ Letters ☐ Witness statements ☐ Reports ☐ Other documents

Have you previously received a response from the school about this matter? ☐ Yes ☐ No Date: _____

Do you require a reasonable adjustment or other support to use this procedure? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Official use

Date received: _____ Clarification completed: _____ Acknowledgement sent: _____

Complaint referred to: _____ Stage: _____ Reference: _____

Appendix 3: Persistent, unreasonable and vexatious behaviour and complaints

St. Adrian's Catholic Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. In keeping with Gospel values, the school expects communication to reflect dignity, kindness, respect, honesty and charity. Robust challenge is legitimate; abusive, threatening, discriminatory or deliberately disruptive conduct is not.

What may be considered unreasonable?

Behaviour may be considered unreasonable where its frequency or nature hinders the fair consideration of a complaint, places a disproportionate burden on the school, affects the wellbeing or safety of others, or disrupts the education and operation of the school. Examples include a complainant who:

- refuses to clarify complaint grounds or desired outcomes despite support;
- refuses to co-operate with the published procedure;
- insists on a process incompatible with this policy or law;
- raises repetitive, trivial, irrelevant or already concluded matters;
- changes the basis of the complaint repeatedly;
- makes excessive, lengthy or frequent contact that obstructs the investigation;
- sets unreasonable deadlines or demands immediate answers;
- makes unfounded personal allegations against those handling the complaint;
- uses threatening, abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or conduct;
- knowingly provides false or misleading information;
- contacts multiple bodies or individuals about the same live matter in an attempt to obtain different answers;
- publishes personal, abusive or confidential material online;
- submits large volumes of generic or AI-generated material that do not clarify the substantive complaint.

This list is illustrative, not exhaustive. The school will consider the circumstances and any disability, communication need or reasonable adjustment before deciding that behaviour is unreasonable.

Informal warning

Where possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will first explain the concern about the person's conduct, identify the impact and ask for a change. If the conduct continues, the school may give a written warning and consider proportionate management measures.

Communication-management measures

- requiring contact in writing;
- requiring contact through a designated person or mailbox;
- restricting contact to specified days, times or intervals;
- setting proportionate page or word limits;
- requiring appointments for meetings;
- declining to acknowledge correspondence that repeats concluded issues or contains no material new information;
- reading and filing further irrelevant correspondence without response;
- ending a meeting or call where conduct becomes abusive;
- considering a warning or restriction relating to school premises in accordance with applicable guidance and due process.

The school will confirm measures in writing, explain the reasons, provide examples where appropriate, state the duration and offer the person an opportunity to make representations. Measures will usually be reviewed after three months and may be extended, varied or lifted according to conduct and risk.

A decision under this appendix is not reconsidered through the standard complaints stages because the person is offered a representation and periodic review. Serious aggression, violence, intimidation or suspected criminal conduct may be reported to the police or other appropriate body.

The school may apply this appendix to unreasonable contact that is not directly associated with a formal complaint where necessary to protect the wellbeing of pupils, staff or governors and the effective operation of the school.

Appendix 4: Complaints process at a glance

Stage	What happens	Target timescale
Informal concern	Raised with the appropriate member of staff; informal enquiries and response.	Response within 5 school days
Formal complaint received	Complaint documented; issues and desired outcomes clarified.	Normally within 3 calendar months of event
Stage 1 acknowledgement	Written acknowledgement and confirmation of scope.	Within 5 school days
Stage 1 outcome	Investigation and reasoned written response.	Within 15 school days
Request Stage 2	Written escalation identifying disputed Stage 1 findings.	Within 10 school days
Stage 2 acknowledgement	Clerk confirms receipt and begins arrangements.	Within 5 school days
Panel convened	Three impartial governors or independent panel.	Aim within 30 school days
Arrangements confirmed	Date, format, venue and evidence timetable confirmed.	At least 12 school days before
Further evidence	Relevant evidence submitted.	At least 7 school days before
Panel pack	Redacted written material circulated.	At least 5 school days before
Stage 2 outcome	Reasoned findings issued.	Within 5 school days
Recommendations	Full Governing Body considers panel recommendations.	Aim within 5 school weeks

Appendix 5: Data protection complaints process

This appendix applies to complaints about the school's handling of personal data, data breaches, Subject Access Requests, Freedom of Information requests and other information rights. It is separate from the service complaints procedure because different legal duties, exemptions and remedies apply.

How to raise a data-protection complaint

A complaint should be sent to the school office and marked for the attention of the Data Protection Officer. It should identify the data or request concerned, explain what the school is said to have done incorrectly, include relevant dates and correspondence, and state the remedy sought.

Acknowledgement and clarification

The school will acknowledge the complaint, identify any clarification required and confirm whether it will be handled under this appendix, the main complaints policy, or both through coordinated but distinct responses.

Internal review

Where practicable, the review will be undertaken by a person who was not responsible for the original decision. The reviewer may consider the original request, search and decision records, applicable exemptions, communications, retention and security controls, and relevant advice from the Data Protection Officer.

Outcome

The school will provide a written outcome explaining whether the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the reasons, corrective action and any available further recourse. The timetable will reflect the applicable legal framework and complexity. Where delay occurs, the complainant will be updated.

Information Commissioner

A complainant who remains dissatisfied may raise the matter with the Information Commissioner's Office. Current contact details and regulatory time limits should be checked on the ICO website before publication or referral.

Interaction with a live service complaint

A data request does not automatically pause a service complaint. If a complainant asks for a panel date to be delayed pending disclosure, the school will consider fairness, relevance, statutory response times and whether the requested information is necessary to determine the complaint. Any revised timetable will be confirmed in writing.

Governor approval record

This policy was approved by the Governing Body of St. Adrian's Catholic Primary School.

Date approved: _____

Chair of Governors: _____

Signature: _____

Next review date: _____

Before publication, the school should verify named contacts, current web links, advocacy details, LADO/MASH information, SEND complaint routes, retention periods and statutory references.