



Complaints Policy

Approved by:	PWG	Date: 26 th February 2026
Last reviewed on:	June 2025	
Next review due by:	February 2027	

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 St George Catholic College is in the Trusteeship of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth and maintained by Southampton City Council Local Authority. Our school leaders and governors are entrusted by the Bishop with the ministry of school leadership and will always act in recognition of the love of Christ for all members of our College community and one another.
- 1.2 We share a vocation for the common good in our world and we are committed to working together as a family. All of our policies and procedures are formed to enable all members of our St George family to be safe and cherished, feel happy and fulfilled and be treated fairly in a positive environment founded on mutual respect and shared values. This policy is part of the foundation that enables everyone to **ASPIRE to be all that God has created us to be.**
- 1.3 St George Catholic College prides itself on providing an excellent education and opportunities for its students. It seeks to provide a collaborative and supportive environment for all users of the college and their families. Should this service fall short of your expectations, and you are unable to resolve your concerns informally this policy details how a complaint can be made and the procedures to follow.

2.0 AIM OF POLICY

- 2.1 Should a complaint be made we will aim to deal with people courteously and in a sensitive and helpful manner.
- 2.2 We will aim to put things right where it is clear we have not given the service that you have the right to expect.
- 2.3 We will analyse complaints so that we can plan for the future by taking your views into account.

3.0 THE STAGES TO FOLLOW

- 3.1 Any individual can complain to the school about the service we provide whether you have a child attending our school or not.
- 3.2 Complaints should be raised within 3 months.
- 3.3 If you are unhappy with the College, the people who would normally deal with any problems you have are the class teachers, tutor or progress leader. Let them know that something is wrong and they will try to sort it out straightaway wherever possible. If your complaint is about other matters not covered by this procedure you should contact the College for guidance.
- 3.4 **Anonymous complaints**
We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.
- 3.5 **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.

3.6 Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by St George Catholic College, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Admissions to schools ○ Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs ○ School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Southampton City Council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection policy and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p> <p>The LA's Designated Officer is: Jemma Swann Phone: 023 8091 5535/ 07500952037 E-mail: LADO@Southampton.gov.uk</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exclusion of children from school 	<p>Complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure https://www.stgcc.co.uk/page/?title=Policies&pid=105</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>

○ Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
○ Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school'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.
○ Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
○ National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus
○ Collective Worship	As a designated Catholic school, any complaints about collective worship should be directed to the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth.

3.7 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.

3.8 If a complainant commences legal action against St George Catholic College in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

3.9 The intention is that any issue is resolved informally at the earliest opportunity. If this is not successful, there are two formal stages through which a complaint may pass.

3.10 **Stage one**

If things cannot be resolved, or if you are still unhappy with the way we are handling your concerns, you can make a complaint. Please submit a complaint form (Appendix A) to the Headteacher, or the Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Headteacher. Your complaint will be fully investigated and we normally respond in writing within 10 working days.

If you are unable to submit a written form, support is available if you or a third party acting on your behalf contacts the school. We will be able to make any reasonable adjustment necessary to make sure your complaint is heard.

Complaints about a member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

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

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

3.11 **Stage two**

If you are still unhappy after the stage one of your complaint, you can escalate the matter to the Chair of Governors. Your complaint will be fully reviewed, and a response will usually be sent to you within 15 working days. We will let you know if it is going to take any longer. If the Chair of Governors feels that it would help to resolve the complaint, they would call an impartial panel of governors together to review your complaint and decide what actions to take. The formal complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Governors at St George Catholic VA College. Details can be found on the College website.

3.12 **Next Steps**

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

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by St George Catholic College. They will consider whether St George Catholic College has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at:

www.education.gov.uk/contactus

by telephone on: 0370 000 2288

or by writing to:

Department for Education

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD.

4.0 **STATUTORY COMPLAINTS**

Some complaints come outside the scope of the College's own complaints procedure and are shown below. They are matters where there are already specific processes in place and should be referred to the relevant authorities set out below:-

4.1 ADMISSIONS

Southampton LA has responsibility for admissions to community and controlled schools. Any appeals or complaints should be referred to the admissions team.

4.2 SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

The college has separate policies and procedures regarding safeguarding and child protection which can be found on our website.

4.3 THE CURRICULUM

The Governing Body should consider complaints about the college's delivery of the curriculum, but not the content of the National Curriculum which should be directed to the DfE.

4.4 COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

As a designated Catholic school any complaints about collective worship should be directed to the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth.

4.5 PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS

A Governing body Committee is required to review any permanent exclusions. Guidance of this is enclosed with the correspondence sent to parents.

4.6 SUSPENSIONS

Parents are able to make a written statement to the Governance Professional if they wish to do so, but the Governing Body are not able to overturn the Headteacher's decision. The Governing Board must consider parents' representations but is not able to direct the student's reinstatement. It may however make a note to put on the student's school record.

4.7 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

Parents and college staff will naturally be in close contact about the special educational needs provision for individual students and concerns will normally be resolved between parents and the college. However, formal complaints should be referred to the special educational needs department.

4.8 PERSONNEL MATTERS

Any staff disciplinary or grievance matters for staff employed in community and controlled schools should be dealt with under the procedures adopted by the Governing Body.

5.0 RECORDING OF COMPLAINTS

The DfE recommends that complaints be recorded properly and timescales for dealing with complaints are appropriate. Appendix A will be the proforma the College will use to give to parents to record serious complaints as they come in. Support will be offered to anyone unable to complete the form for whatever reason, and reasonable adjustments will be made, including representation from a third party such as an interpreter.

The College will keep the following secure confidential records for all formal complaints received:

- Records of the progress of the complaint

- Notes of meetings and phone calls
- Copies of letters or emails related to the complaint

6.0 PERSISTENT OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS OR HARASSMENT

St George Catholic College takes all complaints seriously, however there may be times when such complaints become obsessive, persistent, harassing and go beyond what is considered reasonable. In these cases, the College will follow the procedure attached to this policy as Appendix B.

Appendix A

COMPLAINTS FORM RECORD

**Please complete and return to(Headteacher)
who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.**

Your name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.
(Who did you speak to and what was the 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:

Date:

Appendix B

The College's Actions in Cases of Persistent or Vexatious Complaints or Harassment

St George Catholic College takes all complaints seriously, however there may be times when the complaints or the complainants' actions go beyond being reasonable and these include actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing or repetitious.

In the first instant the College will verbally inform the complainant that their action is considered unreasonable/unnecessary and if not modified further action may be taken.

If the behaviour is not modified, the College will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, (not necessarily in the sequential order below) having regard to the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on the College community:

- 1) inform the complainant in writing that their behaviour is now considered by the College to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore falls under the terms of this policy procedure
- 2) inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties
- 3) inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication from the complainant to the College should be by letter only
- 4) in the case of physical or verbal aggression, we may refer the matter to the police and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the College site; or we may proceed straight to a temporary ban
- 5) inform the complainant of a permanent ban from the College site
- 6) consider taking legal action on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation

Legitimate new complaints will still be considered even if the person making them is, or has been, subject to previous persistent or vexatious actions. In these circumstances legal advice may be sought.

If a complainant's persistent complaining/harassing behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the College may resume the process identified above at an appropriate level. In these circumstances legal advice may be sought from legal advisors.

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 committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

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

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

The complaints co-ordinator should:

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

Clerk to the Governing Body

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

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

Committee Chair

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

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

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

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself the issues are addressed.
- key findings of fact are made.
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently.
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.
- the meeting is minuted.
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so.
No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.
We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting.
Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting.
Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.
If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.
However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.