COMPLAINTS POLICY FOR
Our Lady and All Saints Multi-Academy Company

November 2026

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE

Making Christ Known Today

1 General Principles

Catholic schools aim to be places where love of one's neighbour is evident at all times. Christ said to His disciples at the Last Supper "This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." It is in wishing to uphold this principle that Catholic schools, and those who work there, commit themselves to care for their school community and uphold the Catholic doctrine and the ethos of the school. Nevertheless, as in any organisation, there can be times when a complaint may arise and the aim of this Complaints Policy is to set out how those complaints will be dealt with and how the school will work with all parties involved towards achieving a satisfactory resolution.

The main purposes of this Complaints Policy is to:

- resolve problems as swiftly as possible, ideally through an early informal stage.
- give complainants a means to raise complaints and to have them addressed.
- explain who a complaint should be directed to at the different stages and how they will be dealt with at each stage, including expected timescales.
- encourage all parties to raise and/or respond to complaints as quickly as possible so that they may be dealt with swiftly and whilst the matter is still fresh in people's minds.
- stress that at all stages of this policy any discussions, consideration and hearings will be held with the intention to resolve the complaint rather than apportion blame.

It should be noted that this Complaints Policy does not replace the arrangements for dealing with certain types of complaint that fall outside of its remit and are covered by other policies, for example, admissions to schools, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, school re-organisation proposals, any matter that may require a Child Protection Investigation, exclusions, whistleblowing, staff grievances and disciplinary procedures and complaints about services provided by third parties using the school premises or facilities. Third parties will have their own complaints procedures in places for complainants to follow in relation to a complaint about them. Schools may seek the assistance or advice from the Diocese or other agencies as appropriate. Any adviser supporting the school through this process may also support the Governors Complaints panel in their deliberations.

This policy is for use by all Catholic academy schools and some school's governance terminology differs within Archdiocesan Multi Academy Companies and Trusts. This policy uses the terms Governor and Local Governing Body throughout, but in some schools different terms may be used.

Schools recognise that complaints can be submitted by anyone, not just by parents of pupils in the school. Whilst this policy only applies to how complaints from parents/carers of pupils at a school will be dealt with regarding their child, complaints from anyone who is not the parent/carer of a pupil at the school will be dealt with respectfully and expediently. However complaints from individuals who are not a parent/carer of a pupil at the school may not be investigated in line with this policy and may be dealt with by an alternative process instead as the school or Multi-Academy Company deems appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for the overall approval and ratification of the Complaints Policy and for reviewing the policy on an annual basis, along with monitoring data relating to school complaints across the Multi-Academy Company. Individual Directors may be involved in the complaints process as set out in this policy.

CEO

The CEO is responsible for reviewing and monitoring complaints across the Multi-Academy Company and all schools, and providing advice and support where appropriate. The CEO will also ensure that the Board of Directors are notified of complaints as appropriate either immediately where there is a serious concern that they need to be aware of, or through routine reporting processes.

Executive Leaders employed by the central team

In order to support the CEO, Executive Leaders may provide advice and support in relation to complaints where appropriate. This ensures that complaints process handling is efficient and timely and does not overly rely on one individual but is undertaken collaboratively in order to secure a satisfactory outcome for all. Executive leaders will review complaints outcomes, providing information to the CEO as appropriate. They will make recommendations in relation to lessons learned or changes that could be made to make improvements to existing practices.

Local Governing Bodies

Local Governing Bodies monitor policy implementation and handle the majority of school-based complaints in line with this policy. Governors will be involved in the investigation and reaching an outcome as each of the complaints stages as set out in Appendix B of this policy.

Principals

Principals implement the policy, investigating and supporting the complaints process as required in line with Appendix B, ensuring any lessons learned or recommendations made are actioned and existing practices updated where an improvement is identified.

Employees

Employees fulfil post requirements by supporting any part of the complaints process through providing information and support as requested.

Pupils and Families (where applicable)

Pupils and families engage with and support the school community where appropriate in alignment with policies and values and as outlined in section 17 of this policy.

Definitions
In this Complaints Policy, unless the context otherwise requires, the following expressions, where they appear, shall have the following meanings:

'MAC' means the Our Lady and All Saints Catholic Multi-Academy Company, that is the company responsible for the management of the Central Team and the Academies and, for all purposes, means the employer of staff within the Central Team and the Academies.

'Board' means the Board of Directors of Our Lady and All Saints of MAC who are responsible for carrying out the employment functions of the Our Lady and All Saints of MAC.

'Central Team' means all staff employed in the Central Office functions of the Our Lady and All Saints MAC.

''Diocesan Education Service' means the education service provided by the diocese in which the Our Lady and All Saints of MAC is situated.

'Director' means any person appointed to the Board of Directors of the Our Lady and All Saints MAC.

'Local Governing Body' means the Board of Governors appointed to a specific school to carry out specified functions as delegated by the Our Lady and All Saints MAC.

'Governor' means any person appointed to be a governor on the Local Governing Body of a school of the Our Lady and All Saints MAC.

'Chair' means the Chair of the Board of Directors or Local Governing Body as relevant.

'Vice-Chair' means the Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors or Local Governing Body as relevant

'Principal' means the most senior teacher in the school who is responsible for its management and administration. Such teachers may also be referred to as the Head of School or Executive Principals.

2 The Role of the Individual Governor

It is important that everyone understands that no individual Governor may deal with a complaint. Anyone considering raising a complaint with the school should refer to the Complaints Management Procedure (Appendix B) to check who the complaint should be directed to.

Governors should not get into discussion with a complainant if they are approached but should advise them only of the procedure to follow. If the situation is such that the Governor has to listen in order to help to direct the complainant, then this would prejudice their impartiality if the complaint is raised and they would be unable to take part in the process any further. Should this situation arise, the Governor concerned must inform the Chair of Governors accordingly.

3 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

In the majority of cases the concern should be handled, if at all possible, without the need to undertake any formal procedures and this should be the objective of all parties involved.
The complaint should be initially discussed with the relevant member of staff, for example the class teacher or form tutor. There is no need at this stage for the complaint to be put in writing, however, the staff member should complete the Initial Record Form (Appendix C) outlining the nature of the complaint and the agreed actions to be taken including any timescales to complete them.

At this stage the complaint should be raised with the relevant staff members as soon as possible in order to ensure that it is still fresh in everyone's mind and can be dealt with and resolved as quickly as possible. Complaints should be raised within three months of the complainant becoming aware of the complaint/incident and be resolved within ten school days, but it should be noted that the sooner the school is notified of a complaint then the swifter it can begin to be investigated and therefore complainants are encouraged to submit their complaint as soon as possible after becoming aware of the complaint/incident. The school will, however, consider exceptions to complaints being raised outside of the three-month timescale and will not refuse to deal with a complaint simply because it has been lodged outside of this preferred timeframe.

Should the person raising the concern be unable to resolve the matter at this stage then it may be felt appropriate to move on to Stage 2 of the process. However, it is expected that the majority of complaints would be resolved by the end of stage 1 without the need to escalate the complaint further.

4 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 1, then the complainant may, if they wish, proceed to Stage 2 by completing and submitting a Stage 2 Complaint Form (Appendix D) to the relevant person as detailed in the Complaints Management Procedure (Appendix B). In most cases the person whom the complaint should be submitted to would be the Principal, however there are some complaints that should be submitted to another person and Appendix B outlines who to submit a complaint to if the complaint relates to the Principal, a governor, a member of the MAC's central team, the CEO or a Director. The Stage 2 Complaint Form should be submitted within 10 school days of the conclusion of Stage 1.

Should the complainant have any difficulties or barriers to completing the Stage 2 Complaint Form, they should contact the relevant person outlined in the Complaints Management Procedure (Appendix B) by telephone or, if they do not have the means to contact them by telephone, contact the school office and explain that they wish to submit a Stage 2 Complaint. They will then be assisted to submit the Stage 2 Complaint verbally and the relevant person will record the nature of the complaint using the Stage 2 Complaint Form.

On receipt or completion by them of the Stage 2 Complaint Form, the relevant person will:

- acknowledge receipt of the Stage 2 Complaint Form within 5 school days.
- ensure the complaint is investigated in line with the agreed protocols of the MAC and decide how best to resolve it. This may involve meeting with and interviewing the complainant and any other persons.
- provide a formal written outcome of the investigation to the complainant within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. This letter will also include details of what the complainant can do next if the complaint has still not been resolved to their satisfaction. Information advising the complainant that they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 must also advise them that if they wish to do so then it must be within 10 school days of the notification of the outcome of Stage 2.

  There may be occasions where the complexity of an investigation may prevent the 15 school days deadline being met, but where possible this deadline will be met. Where it is not possible to provide a written outcome within 15 school days then the person investigating the complaint will write to the complainant in line with Section 14 of this policy to provide a new timescale and reasons for the delay.

5 Stage 3 – Governors Complaints Panel

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 process, they may, if they wish, request that the complaint be considered by a Governors Complaints Panel. To request this, the complainant will need to complete and return the Stage 3 Complaint Form (Appendix E) within 10 school days of the notification of the outcome of Stage 2.

This form should be sent to the Chair of the Local Governing Body via the school address unless the complaint is regarding an individual governor or the entire governing body in which case the form should be sent to the Clerk to the Local Governing Body via the school address.

Should the complainant have any difficulties or barriers to completing the Stage 3 Complaint Form, they should contact the school office and explain that they wish to submit a Stage 3 Complaint. The school will then contact the Chair or Vice-Chair of Governors as appropriate to broker contact between them and the complainant. The complainant will then be assisted to submit the Stage 3 Complaint verbally and the Chair of Governors (or Vice-Chair of Governors as appropriate) will record the nature of the complaint using the Stage 3 Complaint Form.

The Governors Complaints Panel is the last school-based stage in the complaints process and is not convened to merely rubber-stamp any previous decisions.

The Panel will consist of two Governors and one other person, typically appointed by the MAC in line with approved protocols, who is independent of the management and running of the school. The independent member of the Panel typically will act as its Chair unless otherwise agreed by the Panel. No Governor may sit on the panel if they have had any prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. Neither the Principal or the Chair of the Local Governing Body should be a member of this Panel. Where it is not possible for the Governors to convene a Panel due to there being insufficient Governors who have no prior involvement in the complaint, then another Catholic school may be approached via the MAC's CEO/Accounting Officer (AO) to request that Governors from that school make up the Panel.

The Stage 3 Complaint Form will be acknowledged within 5 school days and the Governors Complaints Panel will normally be convened within 20 school days of the receipt of the form. The complainant will be invited to attend the panel hearing and may be accompanied if they wish.

Both parties should normally be present whilst the complaint is being described and responded to. Complainants will be invited to attend the panel hearing and can be accompanied if they wish, for example by a relative or friend. DfE guidance recommends that neither the complainant nor the school bring legal representation as the panel hearing is not a form of legal proceeding.
However, if a member of staff is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by a union representative.

However, there may be situations where the Chair of Governors considers that the relationship between the complainant and the school has broken down to such an extent that any further meeting that they jointly attend would not be beneficial. If this situation arises then the Chair of Governors may decide that the Stage 3 hearing should be held in two parts with each party, and their witnesses, meeting with the Governors Complaints Panel on their own. Should this decision be taken then the Chair of Governors will advise both parties, the Clerk to the Complaints Panel and the Chair of the Complaints Panel accordingly.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted but if a complainant's own disability or special needs requires reasonable adjustments then the Clerk should be notified so that measures can be put in place. Recordings must never take place (by any party) without informing the panel. The committee will consider the complaint, and all the evidence presented to reach a decision as to whether to uphold or reject the complaint, either fully or in part.

The panel will consider the following:

- any appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- whether to dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- whether to uphold the complain in whole or in part.
- whether changes to the school procedures or systems in the future may be necessary to ensure that situations of a similar nature do not recur.

The panel will take into account whether the complaint has been handled properly and reasonably in accordance with this policy and whether the outcome at Stage 2 was reasonable and appropriate.

As part of the Governors Complaints Panel hearing the following will be undertaken:

- a Clerk to the panel will be appointed. This would usually be the Clerk to the Governors or another Clerk assigned by the MAC.
- the Clerk will ensure that all parties have received a copy of this Complaints Policy.
- the Clerk will set a date, time and venue for the hearing, considering the availability of all involved where practical to do so, within 20 school days of the receipt of the Stage 3 Complaint Form. The venue will be accessible for all parties.
- Should the complainant be unable to attend the date of the hearing they must notify the clerk as soon as possible. Effort will be made to offer an alternative date instead which is mutually convenient, but if this is not possible, for example due to panel members or witnesses being unavailable on an alternative date, the hearing will take place in absence of the complainant and the complaint considered on the written evidence that has been submitted.
- at least 10 school days prior to the hearing all parties will submit to the Clerk to the Complaints Panel any written evidence or other documentation to be presented at the hearing, together with the names of any witnesses either party wishes to call.
- all written evidence or other documentation submitted will be sent to all parties and the panel members to arrive at least 5 school days prior to the hearing.

- the Clerk to the Complaints Panel will record the proceedings and notify, in writing, all parties of the panel's decision within 5 school days of the hearing.
- the issues raised in the complaint are addressed.
- the panel will be open minded and act independently.
- no member of the panel will have a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in any earlier stage of the procedure.
- only the issues raised in the complaint will be discussed and considered. Any new issues raised will need to be raised as a separate complaint and given due consideration by progressing through the Complaints Policy.
- if any party fails to attend the Governors Complaints Panel hearing, then the hearing will continue in their absence and considered on any written evidence that the absent party has submitted at least 10 school days prior to the hearing.

The following points should also be noted:

- all parties shall be put at ease and the hearing will be conducted as informally as possible with each party treating the other with respect and dignity.
- the Chair of the Complaints Panel will explain the panel's remit to all parties and ensure that each party has the opportunity to put their case without undue interruption and to ask questions.
- witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their own evidence.
- after an introduction by the Chair of the panel, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint and be followed by their witnesses.
- the Principal may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken but only to clarify what they are saying.
- the Principal is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- the complainant may question both the Principal and the school's witnesses after each has spoken but only to clarify what they are saying.
- the panel may ask questions at any time.
- the complainant is invited to sum up their complaint.
- the Principal is invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- the Chair explains that both parties will receive the written decision of the panel from the Clerk within 5 school days.
- both parties leave together whilst the panel considers the issues. The Clerk, and any other advisers, may be present with the panel during their discussion but the conclusions and recommendations are the responsibility of the panel members only.

The Chair of the Complaints Panel, through its Clerk, will ensure that all parties are notified in writing of the panel's decision within 5 school days. The reasons for the decision will be clearly defined, in plain English and will include information regarding any further rights of appeal. If the panel makes findings and recommendations as a result of the panel hearing then these findings and recommendations will be shared with the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. A copy of any findings and recommendations will also be made available for inspection by the Board of directors and the Principal of the school. A copy of the minutes of the panel hearing will be issued to the complainant.

If either party requires clarification concerning any points in the letter, this will be provided by the Chair of the Complaints Panel.

6 Complaints about the Central Team, Governors, CEO or Director

If a complaint is about a Governor, the complaint should be sent to the Chair of the relevant Local Governing Body who will investigate the complaint in line with Stage 1.

If a complaint is about a member of the central team then the complaint should be sent to the CEO to be investigated who will either investigate the complaint in line with Stage 1 or will delegate the investigation to a person of suitable seniority and experience.

If a complaint is about the CEO or a Director then the complaint should be sent to the Chair of the Board of Directors.

If a complaint is about the Chair of the Board of Directors, the complaint should be sent to the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors.

Complaints submitted about the CEO or any Director will not be investigated under Stage 1. Instead, they will proceed to a formal Stage 2 investigation carried out by the person stated in Appendix B.

The CEO, Chair of the Local Governing Body or the Chair or Vice Chair of the Board of Directors, as applicable, will write to the complainant acknowledging receipt of 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 in line with this Complaints Policy and will confirm the date for providing a response to the complainant.

Following the investigation, the person who has carried it out will write to the complainant advising of the outcome. The investigation will be completed as quickly as possible in order for the complainant to receive a prompt response. If there is an unexpected or unreasonable delay to an outcome being reached, the person carrying out the investigation will write to the complainant explaining the reason for the delay and providing an indication as to when an outcome will be reached.

A copy of the outcome letter will be provided to the CEO, who will report the outcome to the Board of Directors in line with the MAC reporting processes.

If the complaint cannot be resolved then the complainant may, if they wish, proceed to the next stage of the complaints process by submitting the appropriate form to the relevant person as detailed in the Complaints Management Procedure (Appendix B). The Complaint Form should be submitted within 10 school days of the conclusion of the previous stage The complaint will then be dealt with in line with the subsequent stage of this policy.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, the complainant may complete and submit the relevant Complaint Form (Appendix D or E as appropriate) to the Clerk to the Board of Directors within 10 school days of receiving the outcome letter. The complaint will then be dealt with in line with the next stage of the policy. There may be times, if the complaint is against a member of the Central Team, a governor, the CEO or a Director, when it may not be appropriate to involve a single school or Principal as it may not be relevant to the investigation.

If the complaint proceeds to Stage 3 then 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. Support from the DES may be sought if the MAC has concerns over the impartiality of the complaint investigation.

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

The complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, it is not encouraged that either party bring legal

representatives to the committee meeting. However, if a MAC employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by a union representative.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted but if a complainant's own disability or special needs requires reasonable adjustments then the Clerk should be notified so that measures can be put in place. Recordings must never take place (by any party) without informing the panel. The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented to reach a decision as to whether to uphold or reject the complaint, either fully or in part.

The Chair of the Complaints Panel, through its Clerk, will ensure that all parties are notified in writing of the panel's decision within 5 school days. The reasons for the decision will be clearly defined, in plain English and will include information regarding any further rights of appeal. If the panel makes findings and recommendations as a result of the panel hearing then these findings and recommendations will be shared with the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. A copy of any findings and recommendations will also be made available for inspection by the Board of Directors.

Please note – complaints raised against individual Governors or Directors regarding their involvement in a previous complaint investigation or panel in respect of matters already addressed through a complaints process will not be investigated under this policy.

7 Register of Complaints

The school will maintain a register of all formal complaints received and note whether each one was resolved at the end of Stage 2 or whether the proceed to a Stage 3 panel hearing. This register will record any action taken by the school or MAC as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld or not.

8 Confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records relating to an individual complaint 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.

9 Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will not be investigated under this policy unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as Child Protection issues, where the School would either involve external agencies or else conduct its own internal review to test whether there is any corroborative evidence which might trigger a formal investigation.

10 Serial, Persistent and Unreasonable Complaints

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. Where a complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair to the Governing Body will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Staff are not expected to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Unacceptable and unreasonable behaviour is that which hinders the consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- Refuses or fails to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint of the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure.

- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on.
- Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately, and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- Uses threats to intimidate.
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence.
- Knowingly provides falsified information.
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint whilst the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Principal or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an *"unreasonable"* marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Principal will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contacts the school causing a significant level of disruption then methods of communication may be specified and the number of contacts limited through a communication plan which will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence the school will immediately inform the police and communicate actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school.

11 Complaint Campaigns

If the school becomes the focus of a campaign and receives a large volume of complaints that are all based on the same subject and/or are from complainants unconnected with the school, then they will be dealt with separately. The school will establish the most appropriate way to deal with these which could include sending a template response to all complainants or publishing a single response on the school's website.

12 Third Parties

If a complaint relates to a third party who is using the school premises or facilities then that complaint must be submitted directly to the third party concerned following their own complaints procedures. For example, this could be where the school site is being used for community facilities or services.

13 Deviation from following this published procedure

There may be occasions when it is necessary or reasonable to deviate from the published complaints procedure. This could be not doing something that the procedure says that the school will, should or may do. In the event that this is deemed to be necessary the school will document any deviation and reasons for it.

14 Timescales

Clear timescales are set out in this procedure defining the time frame that a complaint will be dealt with at each stage. However, in the event of a complaint being complex and further investigations are necessary it may become clear that the published timescale cannot be met. In this event then the school will set new timescales. The complainant will be sent the details of the next timescales and be provided with an explanation of the delay.

Where a complainant submits a complaint outside of the time frame outlined in these procedures the school will take exceptional circumstances into account when deciding whether to accept or progress a complaint and will not refuse to deal with a complaint simply because it has been lodged outside of this preferred timescale.

Please note that any reference to 'Working Day' means any day on which the school is open to children and staff.

15 Taking a complaint further

The DfE will consider complaints relating to academy schools in England but expects complainants to have completed the local complaints procedures first unless it relates to children at risk of harm or are missing education. A complaint can be raised with the DfE through their online form at Contact the Department for Education - Contact type - GOV.UK. The DfE cannot overturn the decision taken about a complaint. Their role is to ensure that the complaint was handled properly by following a published procedure that complies with part 7 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The DfE will only consider the complaint if the complainant can provide evidence that the school or MAC:

- does not have a complaints procedure
- did not provide a copy of its complaints procedure when requested
- does not have a procedure that complies with statutory regulations
- has not followed its published complaints procedure
- has not allowed its complaints procedure to be completed

The DfE is not able to:

- overturn the panel's decision
- re-investigate the original complaint
- review the accuracy of minutes taken or documents provided
- order that compensation is paid
- direct the school to discipline / exclude pupils
- force the school to discipline / dismiss staff
- instruct the school to apologise

The DfE will intervene when a school or MAC has:

- breached a clause in its funding agreement
- failed to act in accordance with its duties under education law
- acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising related education functions

The DfE will review the evidence provided, including the published policies of the school or MAC, to determine whether it is appropriate to take any action.
Parents should follow this complaints policy in full to address concerns prior to contacting external bodies such as Ofsted unless there is an immediate safeguarding concern.

16 Complaints Relating to Personal Data or Data Protection

Our Lady and All Saints MAC takes concerns about the handling of personal data seriously. Anyone may make a complaint where they believe the school has not handled personal data in accordance with its own policies or statutory requirements or legislation. This may include, for example:

- access to personal information;
- accuracy of records;
- sharing of personal data;
- use of photographs, video recordings, or biometric data;
- retention of records;
- confidentiality breaches;
- how the school has responded to a subject access request; or
- any other concern regarding how the School collects, uses, stores, or discloses personal data.

Complaints received in relation to personal data or data protection will not follow the 3 stage process outlined above in this policy. Anyone wishing to submit a complaint relating to personal data or data protection should do so as follows:

- by emailing the complaint to communications@olaas.co.uk;
- by writing via the office at Our Lady and All Saints MAC, Bethany House, 155a Kineton Green Road, Olton, Solihull, B92 7EG

Anyone unable to submit a complaint in writing or by email should call the MAC on 0121 740 0746 and assistance will be provided for the complaint to be provided verbally to a member of school staff who will record the details for investigation purposes.

The complaint should include sufficient information to allow the school to investigate.

The school will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 30 calendar days;
- investigate the issues raised and keep the complainant updated on the progress of the investigation;
- keep appropriate records of the investigation and outcome;
- respond in writing, without undue delay, informing the complainant of the outcome of the complaint and any actions taken; and

Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the school's response, they may raise the matter with the UK Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Further information about data protection rights and complaints is available from the ICO's website at Information Commissioner's Office

17 Expectations under this procedure

When raising a complaint under this policy a complainant can expect the school and MAC to:

- take the complaint seriously.
- treat them with courtesy and respect.
- deal with the complaint with discretion and confidentiality (although if the matter relates to the safety and wellbeing of a child then the school may have to share the details with other agencies).
- offer them the opportunity to be accompanied by a friend, adviser or colleague.
- meet the timescales set unless there are good reasons to extend these, in which case they will be informed of this.
- seek and offer resolution at all stages.

- inform them of the action taken to resolve the complaint and of any measures put in place by the school and/or the MAC to ensure that a similar complaint does not arise in the future.

In turn, the school expects that complainants will:

- treat school and MAC staff with respect.
- enter into the process in the spirit of seeking resolution.
- be mindful of the need to keep information relating to children confidential in the interest of all students.
- appreciate that if the MAC considers that disciplinary action may be necessary against a member of staff then this will be dealt with under the school's disciplinary procedure and in confidence.

  The final two points above means that where a complaint relates to or involves a member of staff or a child or pupil then the complainant will not be provided with information around action or decision taken in relation to that person as to do so would breach confidentiality.

18 Guidance on using AI tools to raise concerns or complaints Introduction

AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini, and similar large language model applications) can help you organise your thoughts, structure your concern or complaint clearly, and express yourself effectively. However, these tools have significant limitations and must be used with care. This section provides practical guidance on how to use AI tools effectively when raising a concern or complaint under this procedure, and what to avoid.

If you are unsure about how to use AI tools when raising a concern or complaint, or if you would like help preparing your concern or complaint, please contact the Governance Lead, gricel@olaas.co.uk who will assist you.

How AI tools can help you

AI tools can be useful for:

a. Organising your thoughts and structuring your concern or complaint in a clear and logical way;
b. Helping you express what happened in plain, clear language if you find writing difficult;
c. Summarising a timeline of events based on information you provide;
d. Suggesting what outcome you might want to ask for; and
e. Checking your draft for clarity, tone, and spelling before you submit it.

Important limitations and risks

You should be aware of the following limitations and risks when using AI tools:

a. AI tools do not know what happened – they can only work with the information you give them, and they may fill gaps with invented details that sound convincing but are untrue (this is sometimes called 'hallucination');
b. AI tools may generate references to laws, regulations, policies or legal rights that do not exist, are out of date, or do not apply to your situation;
c. AI tools may produce language that is overly formal, legalistic, or aggressive, which may not reflect your genuine concern and may make it harder for us to resolve the matter constructively;
d. any personal data (including names, dates of birth, or other identifying information about your child, other children, staff or other individuals) that you enter into an AI tool may be stored, processed or used by the AI provider in ways that are outside your control and may breach data protection law;
e. AI-generated complaints that do not accurately reflect your experience may cause delays in resolving your concern, as we may need to spend time clarifying what happened;

f. AI tools work by predicting the most likely answer based on the information they have been trained on. They do not check whether their output is accurate or relevant to your situation, and the most likely-sounding answer is not always the correct one. AI tools are also designed to make you feel helped and understood, which means they may agree with your point of view, use an overly sympathetic tone, or present your complaint in a one sided way rather than giving a balanced account of what happened. This can wrongly reinforce your point of view and make you more fixed in your position, which may make it harder for us to work together to resolve the matter.

What to do and what to avoid

Do	Don't
Write down the key facts yourself first (what happened, when, who was involved, and what you would like us to do) before using an AI tool.	Copy and paste AI-generated text without reading and checking it thoroughly.
Use AI to help you structure and clarify what you have already written, rather than to generate the complaint from scratch.	Submit a complaint that contains facts, events or details that you have not personally verified as accurate.
Read everything the AI produces carefully and remove or correct anything that is inaccurate, exaggerated or that you did not experience.	Rely on any legal advice, references to legislation or statements about your rights generated by an AI tool without checking them independently.
Use your own words where possible – your complaint should sound like you.	Enter the names or personal data of your child, other children, staff members, or any other individuals into an AI tool.
Remove all personal data (names, dates of birth and other identifying information about individuals) before entering any information into an AI tool – you can use placeholders such as 'my child', 'the class teacher' or 'Teacher A' instead.	Use AI to generate multiple or repetitive complaints about the same issue.

Example prompts for using AI tools effectively

The following example prompts illustrate how AI tools can be used effectively to help you prepare a concern or complaint.

In each case, you should replace the descriptions in square brackets with your own details, taking care not to include any personal data or names.

Example 1 Organising your thoughts:

"*I want to raise a concern with my child's school about [describe the issue in general terms, e.g. 'how a bullying incident was handled']. The key things that happened are: [list the main events in the order they happened, using descriptions such as 'my child', 'the class teacher' etc. instead of names]. Can you help me organise these into a clear, chronological summary that I can use when speaking to the school?"*

Why this helps: Before writing a formal complaint, it can be difficult to know where to start, particularly if several things have happened over a period of time. This prompt helps you to present the key events in a logical order, making it easier for us to understand your concern and for you to feel confident that nothing important has been left out.

Example 2 – Structuring a written complaint:

"*I need to write a formal complaint to my child's school. The issue is [describe the issue]. I have already tried to resolve this informally by [describe what you did]. The key facts are [list the facts]. The outcome I am looking for is [describe what you want to happen]. Can you help me*

structure this into a clear letter, using plain language and a respectful tone? Do not add any facts or details that I have not provided."

Why this helps: A well-structured complaint is more likely to be understood and dealt with effectively. This prompt helps you to set out the issue, the steps you have already taken, the relevant facts, and the outcome you are seeking in a clear and logical way, without the AI tool adding anything you have not told it.

Example 3 – Checking tone and clarity:
"I have drafted the following complaint to my child's school: [paste your draft, with names removed]. Can you suggest how I could make this clearer and more constructive in tone, without changing the facts or adding anything new?"

Why this helps: When raising a concern or complaint, it is natural to feel frustrated or upset. This prompt allows you to check that your draft communicates your concern clearly and constructively, which is more likely to lead to a productive response, without altering the substance of what you have written.

Example 4 – Identifying what outcome to request:
"I am raising a complaint with my child's school about [describe the issue]. I am not sure what outcome to ask for. Based on the facts I have described, can you suggest some realistic outcomes I could request? Please do not suggest legal remedies or refer to specific laws."

Why this helps: It is not always easy to know what to ask for when raising a complaint. This prompt can help you to think through realistic and proportionate outcomes, whilst ensuring that the AI tool does not stray into providing legal advice, which it is not equipped to give.

If there are any queries regarding the implementation of this policy or the complaints process, please contact in the first instance the Governance Lead, Laura Grice on gricel@olaas.co.uk.

Should there be questions or feedback in relation to the model Complaints Policy, please contact the Birmingham Diocesan Education Service:

Email: governance@bdes.org.uk

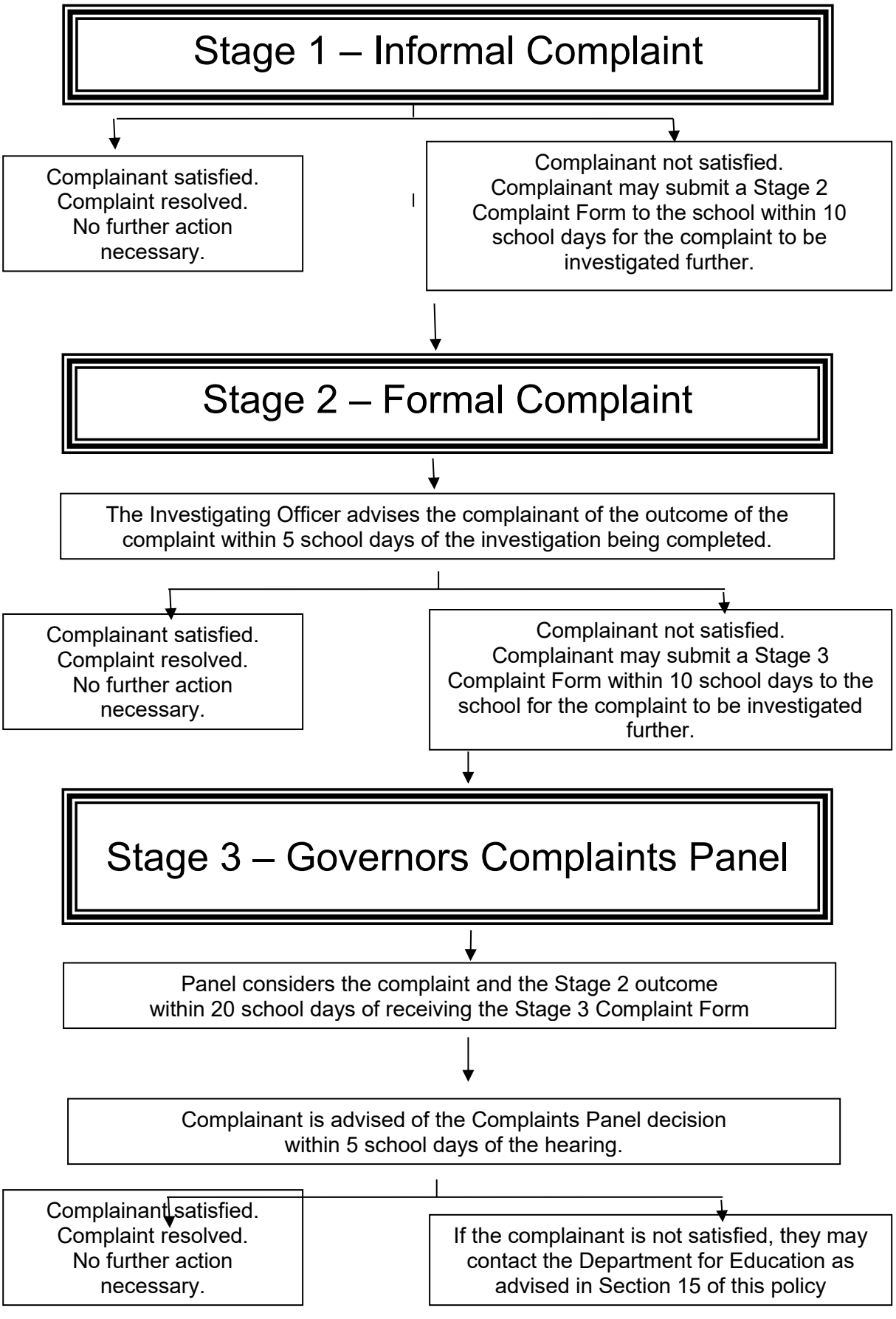
Telephone: 01675 464755

Address – Birmingham Diocesan Education Service
Don Bosco House
Coventry Road
Coleshill
Birmingham
B46 3EA

Website: www.bdes.org.uk

Appendix A

FLOWCHART TO SHOW GENERAL COMPLAINTS PROCESS



Appendix B

Complaints Management Procedure

Who the Complaint relates to:	**Stage 1: Informal Resolution**	**Stage 2: Formal Resolution**	**Stage 3: Governors Complaints Panel**
Pupil, parents or staff (other than the Principal)	The relevant member of staff, eg the class teacher or form tutor	The Principal or his/her nominee	Panel appointed by the MAC in line with its agreed protocols
The Principal	The Principal	The Chair of the Local Governing Body or another nominated non-staff Governor	Panel appointed by the MAC in line with its agreed protocols
A Governor or Governors (other than the Chair of Governors) of the Local Governing Body	The Chair of the Local Governing Body or Regional Governance Group as appropriate.	A Director	Panel appointed by the MAC in line with its agreed protocols
The Chair of the Local Governing Body	The complaint will proceed directly to Stage 2 – See Section 6	A Director	Panel appointed by the MAC in line with its agreed protocols
A member of the MAC central team	CEO	A Director	Panel appointed by the MAC in line with its agreed protocols
The CEO	The Complaint will proceed directly to Stage 2 – See Section 6	The Chair of the Board of Directors or another Director appointed by the Board	Panel appointed by the MAC in line with its agreed protocols
A Director or Directors (other than the Chair of the Board)	The complaint will proceed directly to Stage 2 – See Section 6	Another Director appointed by the Board	Panel appointed by the MAC in line with its agreed protocols
The Chair of the Board of Directors	The complaint will proceed directly to Stage 2 - See Section 6	Another Director appointed by the Board	Panel appointed by the MAC in line with its agreed protocols
If a complaint relates to any individual governor, both the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors or the entire governing body then it should be submitted to the Clerk to the Governing Body who will then determine the most appropriate course of action in liaison with the MAC's CEO/ Accounting Officer and the MAC's approval protocols. This will depend on the nature of the complaint. It may involve escalating the complaint to the Board of Directors, who may in exceptional circumstances determine it is necessary to deviate from this published procedure as set out in section 12 above.			

Note: No person will be involved at Stage 3 if they have been involved in the complaint in any way prior to the Stage 3 panel hearing.

All stage 3 panel hearings will contain at least one individual who is independent of the management and running of the School (where the complaint is related to a school, Principal or governor) or the management and running of the MAC (where the complaint is related to a member of the MAC's central team, the CEO or Director).

Appendix C

Initial Record Form for a School Complaint

School:		
Name of Complainant:		
Name of Child:		
Date of Contact with School:		
Nature of Concern		
Actions Taken		
Name:	Signature:	Date:

Appendix D

Stage 2 Complaint Form

Your Name:	
Child's Name:	
Your relationship to the child:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone Number(s):	
Email Address:	
Details of your complaint:	
What action, if any, have you already taken to resolve your complaint? Please include details of who you spoke to and what was the response/outcome (including dates where possible):	

What actions do you feel may resolve the complaint at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork to this Form? If yes, please give details.	
Signature:	Date:
For Office Use Only	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By who:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date complaint referred:	

Appendix E

Stage 3 Complaint Form

Your Name:	
Child's Name:	
Your relationship to the child:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone Number(s):	
Email Address:	
Please provide details of why you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation:	
What actions do you feel may resolve the complaint at this stage?	

Are you attaching any paperwork to this Form? If yes, please give details.	
Signature:	Date:
For Office Use Only	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By who:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date complaint referred:	

Our Lady and All Saints MAC
Bethany House,
155a Kineton Green Road, Olton,
Solihull,
England,
B92 7EG
www.olaas.co.uk.
Tel: 0121 740 0746