COMPLAINTS POLICY
including EYFS

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Holy Cross Prep School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents of pupils do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure.

1.2 Complaints are not easy to define, and it is therefore important to bear in mind that what may be initially presented as a complaint, is in fact a problem or a concern. It is any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school.

1.3 Complaints will be investigated speedily, efficiently, fully and fairly. All aspects of each complaint will be given due consideration.

1.4 The aim of this complaints procedure is to ensure that a complaint is fully considered and wherever possible, resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

1.5 When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify: what has happened; who was involved; and what the complaint feels would put things right. The school aims to work co-operatively with the complainant throughout the complaints process and expects this to be reciprocated by the complainant: responding to deadlines and communication promptly; asking for assistance as needed; treating all those involved with respect; and not publishing details about the complaint on social media.

1.6 It may be that a complaint can be resolved without formally invoking these procedures, particularly where the complaint can be redefined as a problem or concern. This procedure does not replace the good practice of resolving concerns or problems as they arise within the general running of the school.

1.7 A written record will be kept of all written complaints and at what stage they were resolved (whether they are resolved at the first formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing - appendix 1 – complaint template).

1.8 Any complaint received by the school will be treated as strictly confidential between the school and complainant. No information or documentation regarding the complaint will be made available to or shared with any third party except where disclosure is required by law, regulation, safeguarding obligations or the proper investigation of the complaint.

1.9 This complaints procedure applies to parents of former pupils provided the complaint was initially raised whilst the pupil was still registered at the school.

2.0 Stage 1 - Informal resolution – between parent and school staff

2.1 It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and **informally.**

2.2 If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's class teacher. In many cases, the matter can be resolved straightaway by these means to the parents' satisfaction. If the class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the head of department (pre-prep, prep, specialists or co-curriculum) or the headteacher.

2.3 Complaints made directly to the headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher, or head of department, unless the headteacher deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

2.4 The class teacher will make a written record of concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received.

2.5 The normal timescale for Stage 1 informal complaints will be within **10 school days** if received during the school term, and as soon as reasonably practicable, taking into account staff availability during school holiday periods.

2.6 Should the matter not be resolved or if the class teacher and the parent **fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents may proceed with their complaint in writing in accordance with Stage 2** of this procedure.

2.7 If, however, the **complaint is against the headteacher**, parents should make their complaint directly to the chair of the trustees whose contact details are available from the school on request.

2.8 Complaints regarding an individual Trustee should be submitted in writing to the Chair of Trustees. Complaints regarding the Chair of Trustees should be submitted in writing to the Clerk to the Trustees. The recipient will determine the most appropriate means of investigating and responding to the complaint, ensuring that any individual who is the subject of the complaint plays no part in its consideration.

Where a complaint concerns the entire Board of Trustees, the Board will appoint an appropriately independent person or panel to consider the complaint and make recommendations for its resolution.

3.0 Stage 2 - Formal resolution - headteacher involvement

3.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (Stage 1), then the parents should put their **complaint in writing** (Appendix 1, Stage 2 formal complaint template,) to the headteacher. The headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

The school will acknowledge a Stage 2 complaint in writing normally within three school days.

3.2 Although all formal complaints will be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example by email. **Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage** and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.

3.3 The normal period from the lodging of the formal complaint with the headteacher to its final resolution will normally be **within a further 10 school days** if received during the school term, and as soon as practical during holiday periods.

3.4 The headteacher and, if necessary, the teacher or head of department, will meet/speak to the parents concerned, normally **within 5 school days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter if received during the school term, and as soon as practical during holiday periods. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

3.5 It may be necessary for the headteacher, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations.

3.6 The headteacher will **keep written records** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

3.7 Once the headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The headteacher will also give reasons for the decision.

3.8 If the complaint is against the headteacher, the complaint should be made to the chair of trustees. The chair of trustees or their appointed nominee will call for a full report from the headteacher and for all the relevant documents. The chair of trustees or their nominee may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the chair of trustees or their nominee is satisfied

that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The chair of trustees or their nominee will give reasons for his/her decision. 3.9 **If the parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3** of this procedure.

4.0 Stage 3 – A formal hearing by a complaints panel

4.1 If the parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the chair of school trustees.

4.2 **The matter will then be referred to a complaints panel for consideration.**

The panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. This is likely to be someone who has held a position of responsibility and is used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments, e.g. serving or retired business people, civil servants, headteachers or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the police force. **Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the chair of trustees.** The chair of trustees, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and **normally within 18 school days of receiving the complaint** if received during the school term, and as soon as practical during holiday periods.

4.3 If the panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than **5 school days** prior to the hearing.

4.4 The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

4.5 If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

4.6 The panel will be a full-merits hearing of the complaint, not merely a check that process was followed. It will have clear terms of reference, a clear process and a direction to reach a final decision within a specified timescale.

4.7 At the panel hearing, the meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. A note-taker will record the meeting proceedings.

4.8 At the panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting. The panel, the complainant and the school representative will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representatives have completed presenting their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

4.9 The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case.

4.10 The outcome. The panel can:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part
- If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:
  - Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint

- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

4.11 Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how it should be carried out.

4.12 After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the panel will reach a decision and may make findings and/or recommendations, which it shall complete within 5 school days of the hearing. A copy of the findings and recommendations of the panel will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and where relevant the person complained about. The panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the chair of trustees and headteacher.

4.13 A panel hearing should take place unless the parents later indicate that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. If a parent does not exercise the right to attend a panel hearing, this does not remove the school's obligation to hold the hearing in conformity with its complaints policy. The school's arrangements for the panel hearing will be reasonable in order to facilitate the parents exercising the right of attendance.

4.14 Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously, confidentially (except where disclosure is necessary in the course of the investigation) and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to those directly involved and the headteacher.

5.0 EYFS complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements.

5.1 Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this complaints procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

5.2 The School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Retention and Disposal Policy

5.3 Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:

- Ofsted can be contacted via www.gov.uk/ofsted or 0300 123 1231
- ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net
- ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

6.0 Record keeping

6.1 Logs will be maintained by staff of written complaints requiring action by the school. These will be monitored by heads of department. Logs of written Stage 2 complaints and all Stage 3 complaints will be kept by the school with a note of the action taken and the outcome. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

6.2 From September 2020, a record of formal complaints which do not have a safeguarding implication will be retained for a minimum of 7 years. Prior to September 2020, this was 3 year retention period.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) concluded in October 2022; however, statutory guidance on safeguarding record retention remains in force. Records must still be preserved until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation, whichever is longer.

6.3 All written complaints about the fulfillment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaint will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request. Parents of an EYFS pupil may also make a complaint to Ofsted, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7LA and/or ISI should they so wish.

6.4 A summary of Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints is reported termly to the board of trustees.

6.5 Written records will be recorded and kept regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

7.0 Persistent correspondence

7.1 Where a complaint has completed all stages of the procedure and a parent continues to raise substantially the same issues, the School reserves the right to conclude that the matter has been exhausted under this procedure and may decline to consider further correspondence on the same matter.

8.0 Complaint campaigns

8.1 Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

8.2 If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

9.0 Accessibility Statement

The school is committed to ensuring that all parents and guardians can access and engage with the complaints procedure:

- Alternative Formats: copies of this policy and related documents are available in large print, Braille, or audio format upon request.
- Language Support: Translation services will be provided where English is not the parent's first language.
- Disability Adjustments: Meetings and hearings will be arranged in accessible locations, and reasonable adjustments will be made for parents with disabilities, including provision for assistive technology or remote participation if required.

- Contact: Parents requiring any of these adjustments should contact the school office as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

10.0 Additional notes

10.1 The headteacher will provide Ofsted and ISI, on request, a written record of all complaints made during the course of an academic year together with the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

10.2 It is school policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on the children.

10.3 This policy is made available to parents on the school website and on request.

10.4 Number of formal complaints during academic year 2025 – 2026: 4

10.5 This is a public policy which is published on the school website and is reviewed annually by the board of trustees.

10.6 Last reviewed November 2026. Next review November 2027.

Appendix 1 – Stage 2 formal complaint template

Complaint Form

Please read the School's Complaints Procedure/ Policy before completing this form. It provides information on when and how this form should be completed.

To be completed by those with parental responsibility for a current pupil and returned to the Headteacher or, if the complaint is against the Headteacher to the Chair of Trustees via russell.hanna@holycrossprep.com

PLEASE USE **BLOCK** CAPITALS

Your name(s)	
Name of pupil(s), year(s) and your relationship to them	
Contact address	
Contact telephone day	
Contact telephone mobile	
Contact email address	
Details of the complaint **Please provide details of the nature of your complaint. If you have more than one ground of complaint, please number them so that each can be considered in turn. If you require more space, you may attach an additional page.**	
Action taken to date (including staff member(s) who has/have dealt with it so far) and solutions offered	

The reason(s) that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you
What action(s) would you like to be taken to resolve your complaint?
Signature(s): **Date:**
School use
Stage in the complaints procedure (circle as appropriate): 1 2 3
Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom:
Complaint referred to:
Action taken:
Date:

How we may use personal information

The School processes data in accordance with its [Privacy Notice] available at [insert link]. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel members appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include:

- This completed complaint form
- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent(s) and pupil(s)
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations
- Pupil records (as appropriate)
- Witness statements (as appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/ minutes of meetings including the Panel hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision.

As part of the complaints process we may also process 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice, Data Protection Policy and Data Retention Policy.