



St Clement & St James, St Thomas' & Princess Frederica
CE Primary Schools
Complaints Procedure

Date written/updated: November 2025 (by Sarah Bouette)
Approved by LifeFull Governing Board: December 2025

Partnership vision

'Belonging, learning and growth for life in all its fullness'

Our vision is rooted in biblical teaching as defined by John 10:10:

'I have come that they may have **life**, and have it to the **full**'

Belonging - Everyone included, everyone welcome

Learning - Love to learn and gain knowledge

Growth - grow spiritually in confidence and courage

Communicating effectively with each other

We value good communication between school, parents and the wider community. It is important to us and helps build a community of trust and understanding that is at the heart of a good school. If you would like to share something with us, our staff are always pleased to make time to speak with you face to face.

If you would like to speak to a teacher or senior leader please call the school office to make an appointment. You can also speak directly to your child's class teacher after school every day to pass on a piece of information or book in a meeting.

Please don't simply approach teachers at the start of the day and expect a meeting then and there – they will be busy and there won't be the time to give you the attention that you require and we want to offer.

We prefer not to use email for extended communications with parents or carers. If you do e-mail us your concerns we will offer to meet with you face to face and not respond by e-mail to the issues you raise. E-mail is a very blunt tool and it is hard to convey deeper meaning and understanding in words on a page. Good communication and understanding relies much more on body language, tone of voice and empathy than it does in simple words and we want our communication with you to be clear, open, honest and productive.

In common with most schools we do not consent to any conversations at school being recorded.

We will respond to any written communication from parents within fifteen school days.

1. Introduction

The schools' Governors are committed to provide the best education they can for all pupils attending the school. They recognise however that occasions may arise where parents, guardians or others wish to make a complaint. The governors are determined that any complaint against their decisions, actions or omissions, or against any decisions, actions or omissions by their staff, shall be dealt with fairly, effectively and as quickly and efficiently as possible. To this end, they have adopted the principles and procedures set out in this document. The procedure is available on the school website

2. Underlying framework and principles

The principles guiding the governors' procedure for handling complaints are that it should:

- (a) be easily **accessible** and well publicised;
- (b) encourage informal resolution wherever possible
- (c) be impartial and non-adversarial
- (d) be **simple** to understand and use;
- (e) allow **speedy** handling, with established time limits for action, and keep people informed of progress;
- (f) ensure a full and **fair** investigation is carried out;
- (g) respect people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- (h) address all the points at issue, provide an **effective** response and, if appropriate, redress;
- (i) provide **information** to management so that services can be improved if necessary.

Complaints will be treated seriously and courteously and given the time they require to be heard. It is important to the school that complainants have confidence in these procedures and know that their case will be thoroughly investigated and heard impartially.

Complainants will be advised at the earliest possible stage of:

- The scope, if any, for pursuing their complaint and the extent of the procedure for dealing with it.
- The way in which the complaint is likely to be handled.

Complaints will be dealt with as quickly and effectively as possible, adhering to time limits laid down for responding to complaints at each stage of the procedure. The procedures for the hearing of complaints will be adhered to by everyone involved unless there is good reason not to.

3. The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. LifeFull Schools takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, LifeFull Schools will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, LifeFull Schools will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important. We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, LifeFull Schools will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

4. Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to LifeFull Schools about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

5. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing (by email or letter) or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or head of school. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the head of school and executive headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the head of school via the school office by email, letter, telephone or in person. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the head of school should be addressed to the executive head teacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the executive head teacher, Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Timescales

The complainant must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. LifeFull Schools will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

The school will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

6. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the head of school, executive head teacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

7. Vexatious Complaints

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the governing body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant writes again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be recognised as vexatious and there will be no obligation on the part of the school to respond.

The school may take steps to limit or in some way ration contact for example:

- directing the parent to a specific teacher or other member of staff as a contact point.
- responding to the complainant at specific intervals.
- informal or formal written warnings given as to future behaviour and the consequences of that behaviour.

In these instances however, care should be taken not to dismiss any new complaints that have been raised alongside previous complaints.

Any new issues should be addressed separately under the relevant stage of the complaints procedure and a continued dialogue with the school is seen as extremely important as part of ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and a significant benefit of doubt should be given to parents / carers.

If a complainant in this category refuses to engage in the school's formal complaints procedures, but continues to complain, then the head of school or chair of governors will consider informing the complainant that the complaints are vexatious.

If the complainant believes that the school has acted unreasonably they may appeal to the Department for Education.

8. Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by LifeFull Schools, 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	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the local authority your school is in Brent - Princess Frederica Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea - St Thomas' and St Clement & St James
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. 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).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions . <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i>

<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 directly 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 directly to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>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.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

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

9. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure LifeFull Schools will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better; an assurance that the event complained about will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in the light of the complaint.

It will be useful if complainants are encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. It is important that we identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any

misunderstandings that might have occurred so that we can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

10. Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

11. Stages of complaints

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the head of school (unless they are about the head of school), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (on the Complaint Form) or by email or telephone.

Within this response, the head of school will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The head of school can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The head of school may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the head of school (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the head of school will provide a formal written response within fifteen school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

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

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions LifeFull Schools will take to resolve the complaint.

The head of school will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the head of school, executive head or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

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

If the complaint is:

- about the Chair or 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 London Diocesan Board for Schools. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with the Chair of Governors. If the complaint is about the Head or school or executive headteacher (and the Chair has had prior knowledge of the complaint) or the Chair of Governors, the Vice Chair of Governors will meet with the complainant.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within **five** school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting **with the chair/vice chair of governors** within fifteen school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

Following the meeting, the chair of governors or vice chair of governors, as appropriate, will provide a formal written response.

Stage 3

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints panel, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaint's procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within five (5) school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five (5) school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting with governors within fifteen (15) school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

The complaints panel will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the chair of the complaints panel. If there are fewer than three governors from LifeFull Schools governing board available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through the LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the panel. Alternatively, an entirely independent panel may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 3.

The complainant may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the panel meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

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

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least **ten** school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least five school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least five school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

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

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and LifeFull Schools with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within ten school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by LifeFull Schools.

If the complaint is:

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

Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions LifeFull Schools will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

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 LifeFull Schools. They will consider whether LifeFull Schools 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.

Recording meetings as a reasonable adjustment

Where there are communication difficulties, LifeFull Schools, will consider, as a reasonable adjustment, allowing the use of recording devices to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point. This will only be allowed if all parties agree, in writing, in advance to being recorded.

This school is a data controller and has the discretion to decide whether to allow complainants to record meetings if it's not required for the purposes of a reasonable adjustment. LifeFull Schools is also responsible for ensuring there is a fair and reasonable purpose for allowing complainants to record meetings, as there may be various levels of identifiable personal information recorded. At LifeFull Schools do not agree to hearings being recorded, other than as a reasonable adjustment. Where the school agrees to a hearing being recorded this must be agreed in writing in advance of the meeting.

Complaint Campaigns

Where the school receives a large number of complaints based on the same subject or from complainants unconnected with the school the school will send a template response to all complainants within five days of receiving a complaint or will publish a single response on the school's website, as appropriate.

LifeFull Schools Complaint Form Template

Please complete and return to the school office who will pass it on to a senior member of staff 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: Email: Telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.
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: