Our mission - 'To create and sustain an inclusive and outstanding learning community for all, rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ, in which all will aspire to excellence in learning, teaching and care for one another, so all will achieve and grow as unique individuals made in the image of God'.

Our Core Values;

Faith, Aspiration & Unity

We are committed to providing a positive working environment, which is free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination and any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation. We have developed a number of key policies to ensure that the principles of Catholic and Church of England Social Teaching in relation to human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies are reviewed regularly in this regard.

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Complaints Policy & Procedure - Document Status			
Date of review completion	Dec 2022	**Named Responsibility**	Finance & Personnel Committee (MA)
Date of Policy Adoption by Governing Body	Jan 2023	**Next Review Date**	May 2025
Policy Basis	HTA Policy based upon model procedure from DFE - Adapted for HTA		

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints policy & 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 Holy Trinity Academy (HTA) 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.

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*'.

Scope of this Procedure

1. Any complaints which subsequently lead to staff conduct actions will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes of this will be confidential and will not be shared with the complainant. The scope of this complaint procedure is covered in more detail in Appendix A.

Timescales

2. Complaints must be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The school will consider complaints made outside of this timeframe only if the chair of governors and Headteacher, having taken advice, are of the view that exceptional circumstances apply.

3. All timescales in this procedure refer to school working days, for this school, excluding school holidays, in- service training (Inset) days and bank holidays.

4. Any complaints made outside of term time will be considered to have beenreceived on the first school day after the holiday period.

Anonymous complaints

5. Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated. However, the Headteacher or chair of governors, if appropriate, will determine whether thecomplaint warrants an investigation.

Serial or Unreasonable Complaints

6. Where the school judges a complaint to be unreasonable or where a complainant is making serial complaints or raising issues again that have previously been addressed under the final formal stage of the school's complaints procedure, the procedure outlined at Appendix D may be invoked.

How to Raise a Complaint - Stages of the Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure consists of four stages:

Informal Stage - usually a meeting with the complainant

Formal Stage 1 - complaints formally investigated by the Headteacher (or designate)

Formal Stage 2 - complaints formally reviewed by the Chair of Governors (or designate)

Formal Stage 3 - a Panel Hearing.

7. A concern / informal complaint can be made initially in person, in writing or by telephone. It may also be made by a third party acting on someone else's behalf, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

8. In the first instance, parental concerns should normally be raised with the class teacher or, if the concern is about the class teacher, with a member of the senior leadership team or the Headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint under Formal Stage 1 of this procedure.

9. Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis and this may also prevent them from considering a complaint if it reaches Formal Stage 3 of this procedure.

10. A formal complaint against a member of school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance to the Headteacher via the school office and should be marked as private and confidential.

11. A formal complaint that involves or is about the Headteacher should be addressed to the chair of governors, via the school office, and should be marked as private and confidential.

12. A formal complaint about the 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 and should be marked as private and confidential.

13. For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure (Appendix B). Help in completing the form can be accessed via the school office.

14. In accordance with equalities law, the school will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. This may include providing information in alternative formats, assisting individuals in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Resolving complaints

15. At each stage in the procedure, HTA will hope to be able to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, it will be acknowledged that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, one or more of the following may be offered:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that the school will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology

Withdrawal of a Complaint

16. If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, they will be asked to confirm this in writing. Once a complaint has been withdrawn, the same issue cannot be raised again.

Informal Concerns or Complaints

17. It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint procedure. The school aims to take all concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve issues raised as quickly as possible.

18. If an individual has difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, the school will respect this. In this case, the complainant will be referred to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the complainant will be referred to another staff member. The member of staff will usually be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

19. The school would hope and expect to be able to deal with most concerns raised on an informal basis, and a complainant should not raise a formal complaint before discussing their concerns informally with an appropriate member of staff. It is understood, however, that there are occasions when people remain dissatisfied and would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, every attempt will be made to resolve the issue through the formal stages outlined within this complaint procedure.

Formal Stage 1 Complaint to the Headteacher

20. Formal complaints must be in writing, preferably on the complaints form provided at Appendix B, to the Headteacher, other than in the circumstances referred to in paragraphs 11 and 12.

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

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

23. The Headteacher may delegate any investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but will not delegate the decision about the merits of the complaint.

24. During an investigation, the Headteacher (or designated member of staff) will, if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish, and will keep a written record of any meetings or interviews in relation to the investigation. Staff members may be accompanied at these meetings by a colleague or trade union representative if they wish.

25. At the conclusion of the investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response, within twenty school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

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

27. 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 wl include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

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

29. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member or members of the governing body (including the chair and/or vice-chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Formal Stage 1.

30. Complaints about the Headteacher or member(s) of the governing body must be made to the Chair of the governing body, via the school office.

31. If the complaint is about significant members, proportions or indeed the entire governing body Formal Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body or the Diocese of Shrewsbury. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Formal Stage 2 Review by Chair of Governors

32. If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the complaint under Formal Stage 1 of this Complaints Policy, the complainant may write to the Chair of Governors asking for the complaint to be reviewed. This request must be made within 10 working days of receiving the letter confirming the outcome following Formal Stage 1. The complainant should not repeat the matters raised in their original letter or attach documentation already provided but should clearly set out how and why the Complainant does not accept the findings made under Formal Stage 1.

    The complainant's letter will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. The acknowledgement letter will confirm the date that the formal complaint was received, the action to be taken and the specified time limit.

    The Chair of Governors should be provided with all documentation relating to the complaint, upon request (normally within 5 working days of receipt of the letter requesting a review under Formal Stage 2.) This should include the record of the informal procedure (if applicable), the original letter of complaint or Complaint Form, any documentation provided by the complainant with their complaint, all investigation records under Formal Stage 1, and the letter of outcome under Formal Stage 1.

    The Chair of Governors will review all of the documentation received and consider the matters raised in complaint and the investigation carried out under Formal Stage 1. The Chair of Governors will only speak to the persons involved in the matters raised, to clarify matters which were not confirmed during the Formal Stage 1 investigation, if required.

    The Chair of Governors will write to the complainant confirming the outcome of the review within twenty working days from the date that the request for a review was received. The letter will set out whether the Chair of Governors agrees with the findings and conclusion under Formal Stage 1, and give reasons, as well as responding to any criticisms of the Formal Stage 1 investigation. The letter will inform the complainant that, if they are unsatisfied with the outcome of the Formal Stage 2 review, they should write to the Clerk to the Governors within 10 working days of receipt of the letter requesting a Complaint Panel Hearing under Formal Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy.

Formal Stage 3 Panel Hearing

33. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Formal Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Formal Stage 3 – a meeting with a panel of three members of the governing body, convened for this purpose. This is the final stage of the complaint procedure.

34. A request to escalate to Formal Stage 3 must be made to the clerk to the governing body, via the school office, within twenty school days of receipt of the Formal Stage 2 response. Requests received outside of this timeframe will only be considered if the clerk to the governing body, having taken appropriate advice, considers that exceptional circumstances apply.

35. The clerk to the governing body will record the date the request to escalate the complaint is received, and acknowledge receipt in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days.

36. The clerk to the governing body will aim to convene a meeting of the governors' complaints panel, which is within twenty school days of receipt of the Formal Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

37. The complaints panel will comprise at least three impartial governors with no prior involvement with the complaint. The complainant will be informed in advance of the meeting of the membership of the panel and asked whether they wish to raise any objections to individual members. If objections are raised the panel will give them reasonable consideration. If the ability of a panel member to give the case a fair hearing is called into question, the reasons given will be considered and that panel member may be replaced.

38. If there are fewer than three governors from this school available, the clerk to the governing body, or the minute clerk for the hearing, will seek to source another governor, from within the LA Governance service team, or through another local school or academy, in order to make up the panel. Alternatively, in rare instances, an entirely independent panel may be convened, to hear the complaint at Formal Stage 3.

39. The panel will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs. If the complainant rejects the offer of the proposed meeting dates, without good reason, the clerk, will decide when to hold the meeting, in consultation with the governors' panel. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence based on written submissions from both parties.

40. A suitable venue must be provided for the meeting, which includes separate waiting areas for the two parties.

41. At least ten school days before the meeting, the clerk to the governing body, or the minute clerk for the hearing, will:

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

- request that both parties provide names of any witnesses to be called and the nature of the evidence which they will be providing, at least five days in advance of the meeting. The panel has the discretion not to admit a witness if they do not consider their evidence to be relevant to the complaint.

42. The complainant may bring someone with them to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Other than in exceptional circumstances (as agreed in advance with the governors' panel) this should not be a legal representative. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

43. If a school employee is called as a witness in a complaints meeting, they may wish to be supported by a representative of their trade union or another colleague. Any such representative will be present in a supportive capacity only.

44. Minutes of the meeting will be taken by the clerk to the governing body, or a minute clerk appointed specifically for the hearing by the governors' panel.

45. There will be no audio or visual recording of the proceedings by any party unless a complainant's own disability or individual needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought, before recordings of meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken. A copy of the minutes of the meeting, once approved by the governors' panel, will be shared with all parties.

46. The panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

47. The panel will 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 Formal Stage 1 of the procedure.

48. The meeting will be held in private and proceedings will be treated as confidential.

49. The meeting will follow the process outlined in Appendix C.

50. The governors' panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel can:
    - uphold the complaint in whole or in part
    - dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

51. If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the panel 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.

52. The chair of the panel will provide the complainant and the Headteacher/chair of governors (depending on who conducted Formal Stage 1) with a full explanation of the panel's decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within five school days. The response will also detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and, where appropriate, will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

53. 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 the school.

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 Holy Trinity Academy. They will consider whether Holy Trinity Academy 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.

Appendix A: Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints other than those that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below. As noted below, school employees may not use this procedure to raise concerns relating to their employment.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• 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 Telford & Wrekin Council.
• 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. Please contact Telford & Wrekin Council.
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.* See HTA Website
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.

• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
• National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, 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 HTA, the complaints procedure may be suspended until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Appendix B: Complaints Form

Please complete and return to the school office marked private and confidential for the attention of the Headteacher or chair of governors who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody atthe 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 whom:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Appendix C: Arrangements and Procedure for Governors' Panel Hearing

1. The governors' panel will agree a chair from amongst their number.

2. Although this procedure may appear formal, the hearing should be conducted in as informal a way as possible, and the chair of the panel should make every effort to make all parties feel comfortable.

3. The chair of the panel will introduce all the parties present and explain the procedure to be followed, and that every effort will be made to keep the process as informal as possible.

4. The complainant will outline their complaint and explain why they are dissatisfied with the school's response at Formal Stage 2. The complainant may call any witnesses in support of their complaint who will attend the meeting only for the time that they are providing information and may be questioned by all parties.

5. The Headteacher and/or chair of governors and the governors on the panel will have the opportunity to ask questions of the complainant.

6. The Headteacher and/or chair of governors will explain their involvement in the complaint and the reasons for their decisions at the informal and first formal stage. The Headteacher and/or chair of governors may call any witnesses in support of his/her statement who will attend the meeting only for the time that they are providing information and may be questioned by all parties.

7. The complainant and the governors on the panel will have the opportunity to ask questions of the Principal/Head and/or chair of governors.

8. Both parties will be given the opportunity to sum up their statements, ending with the complainant. No new material may be introduced at this stage.

9. The governors may decide to adjourn the hearing pending further investigation at any stage, if this seems necessary.

10. Both parties will leave the meeting and the governors will consider the information that has been put to them. The clerk will remain for this part of the meeting in order to clarify anything if necessary, but the governors' deliberations will not be minuted.

11. The governors' panel must reach a unanimous or majority decision as to whether or not to uphold the complaint wholly or in part, and what action (if any) the school needs to take to resolve the complaint. This may include referring the matter to another formal process, whether in relation to a complaint against a governor or a member of the school staff. Normally the governors will reach a decision at this point, but they may feel the need to take further advice. Where this is the case, they should aim to reach a decision as soon as possible.

12. The governors will communicate their response to both parties in writing as soon as possible but in any case, within five working days of reaching their decision.

Appendix D: Policy for Managing Serial or Unreasonable Complaints or Behaviours

1. HTA is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

2. This school defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school. For example, if the complainant:

   - refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
   - refuses to co-operate with the complaint investigation process
   - refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint procedure
   - insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint 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 complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the DFE
   - 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 in contravention to the HTA Parents Social Media Code of Conduct.

3. Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while 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.

4. Whenever possible, the Headteacher or chair of governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking or label.

5. If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant, explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

6. In response to any incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately record the details and inform the police, where appropriate, and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the HTA site.