



# Policies

## Complaints Policy & Procedure

Next review date: May 2028





## Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School & Sixth Form College

### Complaints Policy and Procedure

<b>Address:</b>	Selkirk Drive, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire CW4 7DX
<b>Executive Headteacher:</b>	Mr Nigel Bielby
<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	Mrs Tracey Goodwin
<b>Date of Issue:</b>	May 2026
<b>Date of next review:</b>	May 2028

#### 1. Aims and Principles

Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School & Sixth Form College (HCCS) is committed to providing the best possible education and support for all our students. We recognise that occasionally, parents, carers, or students may have concerns or complaints.

Our procedure is designed to be:

- **Simple:** Easy to understand and follow.
- **Impartial:** Ensuring a fair investigation.
- **Non-adversarial:** We aim to resolve issues, not assign blame.
- **Timely:** adhering to the specific time limits set out below.

#### Differentiation between a concern and a complaint:

- **A concern:** An expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.
- **A complaint:** 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 complaint's procedure.*

#### 2. Scope

This policy covers all complaints or concerns raised by any person about any provision facilities or services provided by HCCS, except for issues that are subject to separate statutory procedures, such as:

- Admissions (Refer to the Admissions Policy).
- Exclusions (Refer to the Suspension & Permanent Exclusion Policy).
- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- Safeguarding/Child Protection (Refer to the Safeguarding Statement).
- Staff Grievances or Whistleblowing.

### **3. The Complaints Procedure**

#### **Stage 1: Informal Resolution (Raising a Concern)**

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 complaint's procedure. HCCS takes concerns very seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Concerns should initially be raised with the relevant member of staff. This is often the Subject Teacher, Form Tutor, or the specific Head of Year. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views and look to refer you to a different member of staff that may be able to help. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, we will ask an appropriate team member to contact you. 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.

The complainant raises the concern in person, by telephone (01477 410500), via email (for example year[x]team@hccs.info), or by clicking here: [Raise a Concern](#)

1. **Acknowledgement:** The staff member will acknowledge the concern within 2 school days.
2. **Resolve:** They will seek to resolve the issue informally. This may involve a phone call, a meeting, or clarification of a specific school policy.
3. **Dialogue:** The aim here will be to have a dialogue and try to resolve the concern, this may take more than one conversation or intervention to complete.
4. **Meeting:** The Headteacher may feel at this stage that holding a meeting to discuss the concern may help to resolve the issue.
5. **Resolution:** The staff member will aim to provide a response/resolution within 5 school days.
6. **Agreement:** Some informal complaints or concerns may require more than one meeting or discussion to bring to a conclusion. If both the parent and the staff member are in agreement, they may continue to seek resolution without initiating a formal complaint. This does not change the right of the complainant to later request a move to stage 2 - Formal Complaint. However, the agreed time after five days will be frozen until the point of the second stage complaint is made.

#### **Stage 2: Formal Complaint (Executive Headteacher Investigation)**

In some circumstances, it may be felt that making a formal complaint is necessary, for example, if the informal stage of the process hasn't resolved the issue that was raised. If the matter is not resolved at Stage 1, the complainant must write to the Executive Headteacher, Mr. Nigel Bielby and outline the nature of the complaint.

1. **Submission:** The complaint must be in writing (letter or email to [office@hccs.info](mailto:office@hccs.info) marked "For the attention of the Executive Headteacher - Formal Complaint"). It should detail the nature of the complaint, steps taken at Stage 1, and the desired outcome. Please complete the Formal Complaint Form [here](#)
2. **Acknowledgment:** The Executive Headteacher will acknowledge receipt within 3 school days.
3. **Investigation:** The Executive Headteacher (or a designated senior leader acting as the Investigating Officer) will investigate. This may include interviewing staff, students, and reviewing records.
4. **Response:** The Executive Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of receiving the complaint. This letter will outline the investigation findings and the decision.
5. **Revised date:** If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, in writing or by email to [office@hccs.info](mailto:office@hccs.info) and marked as Private and Confidential. The Chair of Governors will then appoint an investigating officer and follow the same procedure outlined above.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing board should be addressed to the Company Secretary also by email to [office@hccs.info](mailto:office@hccs.info) marked as Private and Confidential.

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. 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 later stages of this procedure.

Please note, an individual may withdraw a complaint at any stage but this must be done in writing so as to avoid any confusion.

### **Stage 3: Panel Hearing (Governing Body Review)**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 outcome, they may request a hearing before a Complaints Stage 3 Appeal Panel.

1. **Request:** The request must be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governors (c/o the school address or [office@hccs.info](mailto:office@hccs.info)) within 10 school days of the Stage 2 response using the Stage 3 complaints form accessed [here](#).
2. The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.
3. **The Panel:** The panel will consist of at least three people not involved in the matters detailed

in the complaint. At least one member will be independent of the management and running of the school. The panel will be supported by the Company Secretary and Clerk to the board.

4. **The Hearing:** The meeting will be convened within 20 school days of the request. The complainant may attend and be accompanied by a friend or relative. If this is not possible to convene the panel within this time frame, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed. The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting.
5. **Outcome:** The Panel will issue a formal letter with their findings and recommendations within 5 school days of the hearing. This is the final stage of the school's internal process.

Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaint's 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.

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 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 committee 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 Stage 1 of the procedure.

#### **4. Accessibility & Inclusion Statement**

This policy is designed to be accessible to all members of our school community. If you require this document in an alternative format (such as large print, Braille, or audio) or translated into another language, please contact the School Office. We are committed to making reasonable adjustments to ensure our complaints process is clear and available to everyone.

#### **5. Learning lessons**

The governing board will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Headteacher and senior leadership team where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or

practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

## **6. Monitoring arrangements**

The governing board will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in making sure that complaints are handled properly. The governing board will track the number and nature of complaints, and review any underlying issues. They will receive a summary complaints report once per school term.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the Clerk to the board.

This policy will be reviewed by the Company Secretary on behalf of the governing board annually.

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 HCCS in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

## **7. If a complainant remains dissatisfied**

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 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by HCCS. They will consider whether HCCS 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](http://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.

# HCCS Formal Complaint Form (Stage 2)

**Guidance:** Please complete this form if you have raised a concern informally (Stage 1) but remain dissatisfied with the outcome. This form initiates Stage 2 of the school's complaints procedure.

Please return the completed form to the School Office, addressed to The Executive Headteacher (Mr. Nigel Bielby), or email it to [office@hccs.info](mailto:office@hccs.info).

<b>Your details</b>	
<b>Name of complainant:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Postcode:</b>	
<b>Telephone number:</b>	
<b>Email address:</b>	
<b>Student details</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Year and Tutor group:</b>	

<b>The Complaint</b>
<p><b>Please provide full details of the complaint.</b> <i>(Include relevant dates, times and name of staff/students involved. You may attach a different sheet if necessary).</i></p>

Have you discussed this matter with a member of staff (Stage 1) Yes  No

If yes, who did you speak to and when?

What was the response/outcome of that discussion?

**Desired Outcome**

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? *(Please be specific about what you would like the school to do)*

**Supporting Documents**

Are you attaching any paperwork or evidence to this form? Yes  No

**Declaration**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official Use Only (School Office)**

**Date Form Received:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Acknowledgement Sent:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Must be within 3 school days)

**Complaint Referred To:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Target Response Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ (20 school days from receipt)

# HCCS Stage 3 Complaint Panel Hearing Request Form

**Guidance:** Please complete this form if you have received the Stage 2 outcome letter from the Executive Headteacher but remain dissatisfied. This form initiates **Stage 3** (The Appeal Panel).

Please return this form within **10 school days** of receiving the Stage 2 response.

**Send to: The Clerk to the Governors** Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School & Sixth Form College Selkirk Drive, Holmes Chapel, CW4 7DX **Email:** [office@hccs.info](mailto:office@hccs.info) (Subject: Private & Confidential - For the Clerk)

<b>Section A – Your Details</b>	
<b>Name of Complainant:</b>	
<b>Date of stage 2 outcome letter:</b>	
<b>Section B – Grounds for Appeal</b>	
<p><b>Why are you dissatisfied with the Stage 2 investigation/outcome?</b> <i>(Please explain why you believe the Headteacher’s investigation was insufficient or why you disagree with the findings. Be as specific as possible)</i></p>	
<b>Section C – Desired Outcome</b>	
<p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>What outcome are you seeking from the Complaints Panel?</b> <i>(eg An apology, a change in school policy, a review of specific decision.)</i></p>	
<b>Section D – Hearing Arrangements</b>	
1.	<b>Attendance: Do you intend to attend the Panel Hearing in person?</b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Accompaniment</b></p> <p>You are entitled to bring a friend, relative, or advocate to support you at the hearing.</p> <p>Will you be bringing someone with you? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>If yes, please provide their name and relationship to you:</b></p> <p>Name _____ Relationship _____</p>
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<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Accessibility/special requirements</b></p> <p><b>Do you or your companion have any specific needs?</b> <i>(eg wheelchair access, hearing loop, large print documents)</i></p>
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**Section E Supporting Documents**

**Are you submitting any *new* evidence that was not available during Stage 2?**

**If yes, please list the documents attached and specify why they were not presented during the stage 2 process:**

1.

2.

**Section F: Declaration**

I confirm that the information provided is true and accurate. I understand that a copy of this form will be shared with the School and the Panel members.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Official Use Only (Clerk to the Governors)**

**Date Form Received:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Receipt Acknowledged:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Panel Hearing Set:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Target: Within 20 school days)

**Panel Members:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ (Governor)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (Independent Member)