Sharing your concerns about your child's education

Parent and carer friendly guide to the DCAT complaints process

How to raise a concern or complaint

St Catherine's College (SCC) recognises that sometimes things can go wrong. We value feedback and want to work with parents, carers and the wider school community to resolve concerns as early and constructively as possible.

In most cases, the quickest way to resolve a concern is to speak to the member of staff most directly involved, such as the class teacher. Our school reception can help direct your concern to the right person if you are unsure. Please contact the school if you are concerned about an issue such as:

- your child's academic progress;
- special education needs provision;
- your child's welfare;
- bullying;
- something that has happened in school.

If the concern is not resolved, please speak to your child's Head of Year. If the matter is still not resolved please liaise with the Headteacher.

A copy of the full DCAT Complaints Policy and Procedure, which includes the complaint form, can be found **here.** Please try the informal route first unless the matter is urgent or serious.

The complaints process at a glance

Step	What you do	What the school/Trust will do	Usual timescale
Informal concern	Speak to the member of staff most directly involved, then the Head of Year or the Headteacher if needed.	The school will try to resolve the concern quickly and fairly.	As soon as possible
Stage 1: Formal complaint to the Headteacher	Complete the complaint form and send to the Headteacher. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, send to the Clerk to the LGB or Transition Board.	The complaint will be acknowledged, clarified where needed and investigated. A written response will explain the decision and any actions.	Acknowledgement within 5 school days. Written response within 20 school days.
Stage 2: Complaint to the LGB or Transition Board	If you remain dissatisfied, complete the complaint form and send to the Clerk within 10 school days of the Stage 1 reply.	The Chair of the LGB or Transition Board, or another appropriate person, will review or investigate the complaint and provide a formal response.	Acknowledgement within 5 school days. Written response within 20 school days.
Stage 3: Complaints Panel	If you remain dissatisfied, write to the Clerk within 10 school days of the Stage 2 response.	A panel will be arranged, with 3 people not involved in the complaint, including one member independent of the school. The panel may meet with the parties or consider written representations. Findings are issued after considering evidence.	Panel arranged within 5 school days. Meeting normally within 15 school days of acknowledgement. Findings within 10 school days of the meeting.
After the Complaints process	If you believe the school has not followed the procedure or has acted unreasonably, you may refer the matter to the Department for Education. Complain about a school	The DfE checks whether the complaint was handled properly. It does not overturn the school's decision.	After the school/Trust procedure has finished.

What should I include on the complaint form?

- A clear summary of the issue and when it happened.
- What steps you have already taken to resolve the matter and who you have spoken to.
- What remains unresolved.
- What outcome or action you feel would help resolve the complaint.
- Relevant, dated evidence where this is available.

What if my complaint is about the Headteacher?

Complaints about the Headteacher should be made in writing on the complaint form and sent to the Clerk of the Local Governing Body (LGB) or Transition Board via Clerk to the Governors. The Chair of the LGB will decide how the complaint should be handled and whether it is within the scope of the complaints policy.

Working together respectfully

We ask everyone involved in a concern or complaint to communicate respectfully using the complaints process and refrain from using social media. This helps the school investigate properly, protect confidentiality and maintain a positive home-school relationship.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Parents and carers may use AI tools to help draft a concern or complaint. If a complaint is unclear, overly detailed, includes incorrect references or does not explain how the issues relate to the school, the school may ask you to clarify or re-present it using clear, concise language and relevant evidence.

If timescales need to change

If SCC or DCAT cannot meet a published timescale, a revised deadline and an explanation for the delay will be given.

If you want to withdraw a complaint

If you decide to withdraw your complaint, you will be asked to confirm this in writing.

What the complaints procedure does and does not cover

This procedure applies to complaints about the operation of a DCAT school or the Trust, unless a separate statutory or Trust procedure applies.

Issue	Usually handled through
Admissions	The school's published admission arrangements or the relevant admissions appeals process.
Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs	The Local Authority.
Child protection or safeguarding concerns	The school's child protection and safeguarding policy and relevant statutory safeguarding procedures.
Exclusions	The statutory exclusions process. Complaints about the application of the behaviour policy may be considered under the complaints procedure.
Staff grievances	The Trust's internal grievance procedure.
Staff conduct or competency complaints	The school or Trust's internal personnel procedures, where appropriate. Outcomes relating to individual staff members will not be shared with the complainant.
Services provided by external providers using school premises	The external provider's own complaints procedure.
GDPR or personal information concerns	The process described in the DCAT Data Protection Policy.