

# Thomas Telford School



## Concerns & Complaints Policy

(Parents & Carers)

April 2026

## Introduction

This policy aims to meet the requirements in the standard at the Education (Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2014 Schedule 1, Part 7

Thomas Telford School takes complaints extremely seriously and will endeavour to answer complaints as effectively and efficiently as possible within the guidelines below. It is use for parents/carers who have students on roll at the School. A separate policy exists for members of the community who are not parents/carers of students at the School.

### **This policy provides:**

- An opportunity to resolve a complaint with the School on an informal basis, for example through discussion with a senior member of staff
- A formal complaint stage where a complaint is made in writing
- A hearing with a panel appointed on behalf of the Governing Board

There are exceptions for complaints relating to Curriculum Collective Workshop and Religious Education; some Special Educational Needs issues and Admissions issues; and others where the Local Authority has statutory responsibilities, including Safeguarding. The Head or the Complaints Officer can provide further information and advice about complaints in these respects.

There are also certain other complaints which fall outside the remit of the Governing Board, for example, employee grievances or disciplinary procedures which are dealt with under separate policies. Any complaints pertaining to the conduct of employees will be dealt by the School in accordance with its disciplinary procedures, with details of the outcome of internal investigations remaining confidential.

Allegation of abuse involving a member of staff should be reported to the Head immediately. Allegations of abuse involving the Head must be reported to the Chair of Governors immediately.

The School reserves the right to seek external advice and support at any time that it is considered necessary or appropriate in respect of either a complaint or concern, particularly where these have become vexatious in nature.

The School maintains a confidential file for each complaint which have been satisfactorily resolved in accordance with this policy. This also includes the action which might have been subsequently undertaken by the School, regardless that a complaint might not have be upheld. It also understands the requirement to make such files available to the Secretary of State, upon request, or other regulatory body.

The Head is Mr Ian Rawlings and Mrs Kelly Burnett is the Complaints Officer.

It is in everyone's interest that a concern is resolved at the earliest possible stage. In our experience the first contact between parent/carer and the School is crucial in determining whether the concern will escalate into a complaint. If a concern is not resolved, then a formal complaint should be submitted, in writing, to the Complaints Officer. The complainant should raise the complaint within three months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within three months of the last incident. We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period or professional development day. There might be exceptional circumstances when a matter is dealt with sooner.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

## **Stage 1 Concern**

### **(Meeting with Teacher, Personal Tutor, Head of Department or Head of Year)**

- As soon as a concern is registered with the School either, verbally in person, via email, in writing, or by telephone, a meeting with the person registering the concern will be offered and if accepted convened within **5 school days**
- If a meeting is not required by the person registering the concern an option of telephone feedback will be offered
- A concern will normally be heard or dealt with by a Teacher, Personal Tutor, Head of Department or Head of Year
- The outcome of the concern will be recorded in the pastoral log and feedback provided to the person registering the concern within **2 school days** of receiving the concern
- If the concern is not resolved satisfactorily, it may be treated as a complaint
- All complaints **must** be in writing

## **Stage 2 Formal Complaint**

### **(Meeting with Deputy Head)**

- Complaint received in writing
- A meeting will be convened with the complainant within **5 school days**
- The complaint will normally be heard by a Senior Staff member such as a Deputy Head
- The outcome of hearing the complaint will be recorded in a letter which will be sent to the complainant within **2 school days**, and the School will retain a copy for its records
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, then he/she should indicate the reasons in writing within **5 school days after receiving the letter** to the Head

## **Stage 3 Formal Complaint**

### **(Meeting with Head)**

- Complaint received in writing indicating why the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stages 1 and 2
- A meeting will be convened with the complainant within **5 school days**
- The Head will hear the complaint
- The outcome of the complaint will be recorded in a letter which will be sent to the complainant within **2 school days**, and the School will retain a copy for its records
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, then he/she should indicate the reasons in writing within **5 school days after receiving the letter** to the Chair of the Governing Board

## **Stage 4 Formal Complaint**

### **(Meeting with a Panel, comprising Governors and independent members)\***

- The Chair of the Governing Board receives a complaint in writing indicating why the complainant is not satisfied with Stages 1, 2 and 3
- A three-member panel as above\* will be convened to hear the complaint which may or may not include the Chair
- A meeting will be convened within **10 school days** for the Panel to hear the complaint
- Parents can attend and be accompanied at the Panel Hearing if they wish
- Members of staff who have dealt with the complaint earlier in the process might also be invited to attend

- The outcome of the complaint and recommendations will be recorded in a letter which will be sent to the complainant within **2 school days**, and the School will keep a copy for its records

If the complainant is not satisfied with the handling of their complaint, then he/she has recourse to the DfE (see additional notes below) or an appropriate third party.

Please note that a written record of all complaints is kept confidential.

If, without good reason, the complainant does not accept one of up to three meeting dates which are proposed at each stage of the process, the meeting will proceed in the complainant's absence and on the basis of the written submissions which have been received from all parties.

### **Concerns or complaints specifically about the Head:**

A decision that the Head has made as a result of a Level 3 complaint does not become a complaint about the Head. If the complainant feels the complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily, they should proceed to Stage 4.

If the concern or complaint is specifically about the Head and is not resolved at Stages 1-3, then it will be necessary for the complainant to proceed to Stage 4 and formally complain to the Chair of the Governing Board. The complainant should write to her at the School address marking the envelope "Confidential". The Chair should acknowledge the complainant's letter in writing within five school days of receipt and decide on what action should be taken. In the event that the Chair of the Governing Board is not available within the stated time period the Concerns & Complaints Officer will refer to the Clerk to the Governors for guidance.

### **Additional Notes:**

The School and Governors will always work with parents to try and secure a satisfactory outcome following a complaint. However, there may be occasions when the expertise within the School is not able or sufficiently knowledgeable to deal with a specific complaint. In such rare cases the Academy reserves the right to refer complaints to experts in chosen fields at any of the three stages in the process including the Executive Advisor. Any such third parties may then respond to the complainant on the Academy's behalf if requested to do so.

In circumstances where the nature and extent of a complaint are unusually complex, the School also reserves the right to amend the timescales used in the complaints procedure to ensure that adequate time is made available to try and resolve the complaint satisfactorily.

Part of the Concerns and Complaints Officer's role is to assist the complainant in the process, and the complainant should feel free to take advice, as appropriate, from the Concerns and Complaints Officer at any time during school hours.

Correspondence sent by post will be deemed to have been received the day after posting when sent by first class post or two days after posting when sent by second class post. Letters may be attached to email correspondence for expediency and efficiency.

Parents/carers that are not satisfied about the handling of their complaint have recourse to the DfE via: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

### **Collecting Evidence**

Any recorded telephone or video images (CCTV) or photographic evidence collected as part of investigations will be processed fairly and lawfully in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) as far as it will be:

- Adequate, relevant, and not excessive

- Used for the purposes(s) stated in this policy only and not used for any other purposes
- Accessible only by the senior member of staff conducting the investigation and after securing permission from the Head
- Treated confidentially
- Stored securely

Data collected by use of CCTV may be used for prevention and detection of crime, staff disciplinary and student behaviour, discipline and exclusions as required.

Data may be stored and viewed from the CCTV provider, or downloaded onto other digital platforms, which may include, but are not exclusively, portable storage devices, laptops, Academy servers. It may be shared with Academy staff, used as evidence in tribunal or exclusion proceedings and may be shared with third party agencies such as the Police, the Local Authority, or Social Care, subject to internal Data Protections processes.

### **The Remit of the Governors' Complaints Panel and others dealing with complaints under this policy**

Whilst the procedures for hearing complaints involve a formal process, and meetings are held in private; every effort will be made to allow the proceedings to be as informal and constructive as possible, focusing on resolution of the complaint to everyone's satisfaction. All parties will be expected to act with respect, courtesy, understanding, and tolerance, particularly if a student is in attendance.

All parties at the meetings will have access to the same documentation which, as far as is possible, will be distributed in good time before the meeting date. All parties will have the opportunity to state their case or position and to ask questions. On occasions, there might be an adjournment of proceedings to provide time for reflection, private discussion or the comfort and wellbeing of attendees. The aim will, however, be to resolve all matters at a single meeting. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are **not** normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. The prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before electronic recordings of meetings take place.

The remit of those hearing complaints will not involve reviewing any new complaints or considering evidence which is unrelated to the complaint. Any further concerns which the complainant should be progressed in accordance with Stage 1 of this policy.

Options available for those dealing with complaints:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- recommend changes to the School's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

The Concerns and Complaints Officer will remain the contact point for the complainant and will set the date, time, and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.

The Clerk to the Governors, or another suitable person, will attend the Panel and Appeals meetings to make a procedural record of the meetings

A template, **Appendix A**, is attached to assist the complainant if they wish.

**APPENDIX A**

**Complaint letter template**

<p><b>Your name:</b></p> <p><b>Student's name:</b></p> <p><b>Your relationship to the student:</b></p> <p><b>Address:</b></p> <p><b>Telephone number(s):</b></p>
<p><b>Details of the complaint</b></p>
<p><b>What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint</b></p>
<p><b>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</b></p>
<p><b>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.</b></p>
<p><b>Signature:</b></p> <p><b>Date:</b></p>