



Data Protection Complaints Procedure Policy

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Circulation:	All Staff & Governors Inspection Portal School Website Parent Portal Senior & Sixth Pupils
Related Policies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data Protection Policy & Privacy Notice• Complaints Procedure (Parents)• Complaints Procedure (Pupils)• Safeguarding Policy• Staff Grievance Policy
Regulatory Body (if applicable)	ICO, DoE
Relevant legislation/guidelines	Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (inc. Part 7 – Complaints Handling) UK Data Protection Act 2018 (2018) The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

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1. Aims

1.1 This is the Data Protection Complaints Procedure Policy of Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation (“the Foundation”).

1.2 The aims of this Policy are to ensure that complaints and concerns relating to the handling of personal data are:

- managed fairly, consistently, and transparently;
- resolved without undue delay;
- handled at the appropriate level with clear accountability; and
- managed in compliance with applicable data protection legislation.

1.3 The Foundation commits in this Policy to observing the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and does not discriminate in the handling of data protection concerns or complaints.

1.4 This Policy will be published on the Foundation’s website and made available in School Offices in line with regulatory expectations.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 The Foundation is committed to protecting personal data and complying fully with all applicable data protection legislation, including the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

2.2 The Foundation encourages concerns or complaints to be raised at the earliest possible stage to facilitate prompt resolution.

2.3 All data protection complaints will be handled:

- without undue delay;
- in line with statutory and regulatory requirements; and
- proportionately, taking account of the complexity and seriousness of the complaint.

2.4 Complaints made by, or on behalf of, children will be handled in a clear, accessible, and age-appropriate manner.

2.5 Any complaint which raises a safeguarding concern will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and managed in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy. Safeguarding considerations may take precedence over the procedures set out in this Policy.

2.6 Individuals may raise concerns or complaints directly with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) at any stage.

2.7 Data protection complaints may be raised **orally or in writing** and may be submitted by any reasonable means, including by email, telephone, letter, or in person.

2.8 Individuals are **not required to use a specific form or channel** in order for a complaint to be recognised, and the Foundation will take reasonable steps to identify and respond to any communication that indicates dissatisfaction relating to the handling of personal data.

2.9 To facilitate complaints from individuals a specific complaint form has been produced and can be filled in online at: <https://link.dcsf.org.uk/datacomplaint> , where a downloadable copy can also be found. Paper copies are available from Durham School and Chorister School officers or by contacting the DPO at GDPR@dcsf.org.uk

2.10 Information about the right to raise a data protection complaint and the procedure for doing so is included in the Foundation's **Privacy Notices** and is made publicly available on the Foundation's website.

3. Definitions

3.1 Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction about how personal data has been collected, processed, stored, retained, or shared.

3.2 Concern

A request for clarification or reassurance which may be resolved informally.

3.3 Parent

Includes any individual with parental responsibility.

4. Procedure

4.1 A data protection complaint may be made through any reasonable communication channel and does not need to refer explicitly to data protection legislation in order to be treated as a complaint under this Policy.

4.2 The Foundation operates a three stage data protection complaints procedure:

- Stage 1: Data Protection Officer (DPO) Review
- Stage 2: Principal Review
- Stage 3: Formal Complaints Procedure (Panel Review)

4.3 The Foundation aims to resolve complaints within the following timescales:

- Stage 1: within 30 calendar days of the complaint;
- Stage 2: within 30 calendar days of escalation;
- Stage 3: within one academic term of escalation.

4.4 Where a complaint is complex or requires extended investigation, the Foundation will:

- inform the complainant of the delay;
- explain the reasons for the delay; and
- provide a revised timeframe.

4.5 Stage 1 – Data Protection Officer Review

4.5.1 Complaints should be submitted to the Data Protection Officer.

4.5.2 The DPO will:

- acknowledge receipt within 5–10 working days;
- investigate the complaint; and
- issue a written response within 30 calendar days.

4.5.3 The DPO may request further information, require verification of identity, and consult relevant staff or records.

4.5.4 The response will set out:

- findings;
- decisions reached;
- reasons for those decisions; and
- any actions taken or proposed.

4.6 Stage 2 – Principal Review

4.6.1 Where the complaint is unresolved, it may be escalated to the Principal by the complainant or DPO.

4.6.2 The Principal will conduct an independent and proportionate review, considering:

- whether procedures were correctly followed; and
- whether the outcome reached was reasonable.

4.6.3 A written response will be issued within 30 calendar days of escalation.

4.6.4 The Principal may nominate another member of the Senior Management Team to conduct this review stage, should they wish to do so.

4.7 Stage 3 – Formal Complaints Procedure

4.7.1 Where the complaint remains unresolved, it will be considered under the Foundation's formal Complaints Procedure in accordance with Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

4.7.2 This stage may include:

- a complaints panel hearing; and
- the involvement of an independent panel member, where required.

4.7.3 This stage will normally be completed within one academic term.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Data Protection Officer

Responsible for receiving, investigating, responding to, and maintaining records of data protection complaints.

5.2 Principal

Responsible for independent review at Stage 2 and ensuring procedural fairness and regulatory compliance.

5.3 Clerk to the Governors / Governance

Responsible for ensuring that complaints panels are properly constituted and that records are maintained appropriately.

5.4 Record Keeping and Confidentiality

5.4.1 The Foundation will maintain a written record of all data protection complaints, including:

- the nature of the complaint;
- correspondence and evidence considered;
- actions taken; and
- outcomes reached with reasons.

5.4.2 Records will be retained and disposed of in accordance with the Foundation's data retention policies and legal obligations.

5.4.3 Complaints will be handled confidentially, with information shared only on a need-to-know basis unless disclosure is required by law or safeguarding considerations.

5.5 Accessibility

5.5.1 The Foundation will make reasonable adjustments to enable individuals to access this procedure.

5.5.2 Assistance will be provided as required to ensure complaints can be understood and progressed.

6. Oversight

6.1 This Policy is overseen by the Audit Committee of the Governing Body.

6.2 The Policy is reviewed at least annually by the Data Protection Officer and submitted to the Audit Committee for approval.

6.3 Reviews will take account of:

- legislative and regulatory developments;
- inspection findings; and
- emerging best practice.

Appendix 1 - Governance Compliance Assurance Statement

1.1 This Policy has been reviewed to ensure compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (including Part 7 – Complaints Handling), the UK Data Protection Act 2018, and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, and reflects current ICO guidance and regulatory expectations.

Andrew Beales

DPO

June 2026