

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School



Complaints Policy

“Inspired by St Joseph, together with Christ, we learn, we grow, we love.”

The love of Christ urges us to care for each other and strive for excellence in everything we do

Introduction

In a Catholic school, parental concerns are of particular importance. A climate of openness and partnership between school and parents is essential.

Nearly all concerns or questions can be resolved very quickly and informally if parents/carers feel able to voice them as soon as they arise. Obviously, the more information the school gives to them the less scope there is for misunderstanding. As part of this information, parents/carers should be told that feedback is always welcome and that, therefore, they are warmly encouraged to voice any concerns straightaway, preferably to the person concerned. In most cases, discussion, explanation, further information – or an apology, if appropriate – will resolve the issue. **Every effort should be made to allay concerns at this level and with the least possible formality. The ideal is that no concern should ever become a formal complaint.**

Occasionally, a concern will be too serious to be handled in this way, perhaps needing greater investigation; or the person concerned may not feel that the answers given so far have been acceptable or adequate. In such circumstances, the concern will become a complaint and the formal procedure should be followed.

At every stage of the formal procedure, the handling of the complaint will be:

- non-adversarial
- swift – using agreed time limits
- fair – using independent investigation where necessary
- confidential

Throughout the process, the school will be willing:

- to listen
- to learn
- to admit mistakes
- to apologise if appropriate
- to address any issues raised
- to change school practice if appropriate

In using this procedure:

Staff are asked to be aware that complainants may feel intimidated by the school as an institution and unsure whether they will be treated fairly

Complainants are asked to be aware that those complained about, especially individual members of staff, may feel very vulnerable during this process

Throughout the procedure the aim of all parties should be not only to resolve the complaint but also to develop and sustain good relationships between all members of the school community.

However formal or serious the complaint or however dissatisfied the complainant, the aim will always be reconciliation between all parties and a renewed commitment to work together amicably. The Gospel values of justice and forgiveness should always underpin the entire process.

This complaints procedure does **not** apply to:

- members of staff (who should use their own Grievance Procedure)
- Procedures with their own appeal structure eg. admissions and Exclusions
- Concerns about the delivery of the National Curriculum

Outline of the Procedure

There are 3 stages to the formal procedure:

Stage 1

Complaint heard by a member of staff (not the subject of the complaint)

In the first instance, all complaints will be addressed to the Deputy Headteacher who is the Complaints Co-ordinator who will either hear a complaint personally or where appropriate, refer the matter to another member of staff. The Co-ordinator will also keep records of each complaint and of the action taken in regard to it, so that Senior Managers and Governors can be kept informed of all issues that arise and as a result can change or develop school practices where necessary or appropriate.

Stage 2

Complaint heard by the Headteacher

Stage 3

Complaint heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel

Stage 1

Complaint heard by the Complaints Co-ordinator

- a. The complaint should be addressed to the Complaints Co-ordinator. This may be done in person, by telephone or in writing.
- b. The Complaints Co-ordinator will log the complaint and either investigate personally or refer the complaint to an appropriate member of staff.
- c. If the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the Co-ordinator should refer it to the Chair of Governors and in courtesy, inform the Headteacher that this has been done. If the complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, the Co-ordinator should refer it to the Vice- Chair.
- d. Whoever investigates the complaint will:
 - Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved.
 - Clarify the nature of the complaint
 - Meet with the complainant or contact them
 - Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right, clearing up any areas of misunderstanding, identifying areas of agreement and discussing what might be possible
 - Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained about.
 - Conduct each interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
 - Keep notes of each interview

Timescales:

Within 10 school days the investigator will complete the investigation and contact the complainant to arrange a meeting.

- At any point in the process, the Complaints Co-ordinator may decide or agree to commission a further investigation, whether by a member of staff or an independent person. If this occurs, the timescale may be extended and the complainant must be informed of the extension and the reason for it.
- When the investigation is complete, the member of staff investigating will meet the complainant to try to resolve the complaint. Every effort should be made to try to resolve the complaint at this meeting.

Any of the following may be appropriate at this point:

- an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part
- an apology
- an explanation
- a clarification of misunderstandings
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again - an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again.
- An undertaking to review school policies

Stage 2

Complaint heard by Headteacher

Where a complaint has not been resolved at Stage 1, it will be referred to the Headteacher, unless the original complaint concerned either the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors in which case the complainant may refer it straight to Stage 3.

The Headteacher will either investigate the complaint personally or refer it to another senior member of staff (who has not so far been involved) or arrange for an independent investigation if appropriate.

Timescales: Within 10 school days of receiving the complaint, the investigator will report back to the Headteacher. Within a further 3 school days, the Headteacher will contact the complainant and arrange a meeting. At any point in the process the Headteacher may decide to decide or agree to commission a further investigation, whether by another senior member of staff, or a governor or an independent person (eg. from the Diocese). If this occurs the timescale may be extended and the complainant must be informed of the extension and the reason for it.

When the investigation is complete, the Headteacher will consider the evidence and whether or not she/he investigated the matter personally, will meet the complainant (with/without the person who conducted the investigation if different) to try and resolve the complaint. Any of the suggestions in Stage 2 may be appropriate at this point. If the complaint cannot be resolved the complainant may refer it to Stage 3.

Stage 3

Complaint heard by Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel

A Complaints Appeal Panel, consisting of 3 Governors, will be appointed annually by the Governing Body. This panel will have delegated power to hear and finally determine

complaints. Any Governor who has prior involvement in or detailed knowledge of a particular complaint or its investigation may not sit on the panel hearing that complaint.

To trigger Stage 3, the complainant will have been dissatisfied with the school's approach to the complaint in the first two stages and must now put the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair will check what has happened so far and if the procedure has been properly followed and it is appropriate to move to Stage 3, he/she, or a nominated other governor, will convene a Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel. If the original complaint concerned the Chair of Governors and was referred to the Vice-Chair at Stage 1, the Vice-Chair will inform the complainant of the name of the nominated governor for referral to Stage 3.

This is the final stage of the procedure. There is no further redress or appeal. It is therefore vital that, in the spirit of the procedure, the Appeal Panel should:

- I. Be prepared to hear complaints without preconceptions
- II. Examine and discuss the matter fully so that they ensure that they have every piece of information or evidence that they require
- III. Give the complainant the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction and worries and to suggest what might put things right
- IV. Be prepared to take whatever action is required

Timescales - The date of the Appeal Panel Meeting should be agreed by all parties within 5 school days of the receipt of the written referral of the complaint. The meeting should be held within 15 school days of the receipt of the referral. The aim of the procedure is to resolve the issue speedily and effect reconciliation if necessary.

(The Order of proceedings for the Appeal Panel hearing will be supplied to all parties concerned as soon as the written referral of the complaint is received)

This Complaints Policy and Procedure is recommended by the Education Service of the Diocese of Westminster.

This policy was written by the Senior Management and ratified by the Governing Body of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

On: May 2017

Next review date: May 2018

To be reviewed annually