

St John's Catholic Primary School



Complaint's Policy

"I am the vine, you are the branches."

Stage One: Informal Complaint

Concerns/complaints can be raised with the class teacher.

If this is not appropriate due to the nature of the concern, the deputy headteacher /headteacher may be approached.

The class teacher will inform the Head teacher of the issue(s) raised and the outcome so this can be recorded. A log of all informal concerns/complaints received will be kept. These will be reviewed by a nominated Governor from the Complaints Committee each term.

Formal Complaint

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcomes of Stage One they may proceed to make a formal written complaint to the Headteacher.

Stage Two: Complaint heard by Headteacher

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, all staff are made aware of the procedures, they know what to do when they receive a complaint.

To assist the procedure the school will respect the views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with the headteacher. Where the complaint concerns the headteacher, he/she can refer the complainant directly to the chair of governors.

Similarly, if the headteacher feels too compromised to deal with a complaint he/she may consider referring the complainant directly to the chair of governors. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

Where the first approach is made to a governor, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the headteacher and advise them about the procedure. Governors will not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

Acknowledgement will be sent within three working days and a response to the complainant will be sent within seven working days.

Stage Three: Complaint Heard by Chair of Governors

If the complainant is unhappy that the complaint has not been resolved they may request that their complaint be considered by the chair of the governors. The chair of governors would investigate the complaint and convey the outcome to the complainant.

A response to the complainant will be within three working days.

Stage Four: Complaint Heard by the Governing Body Complaints Committee

If the complainant feels that their complaint still hasn't been resolved, they need to write to the chair of the governors' complaints committee giving details of the complaint. The chair would acknowledge receipt of the letter within five working days and would ask the clerk to convene a GB complaints committee meeting. This meeting should, wherever possible, take place within three weeks (excluding school holidays) of dispatch of the acknowledgment letter unless a longer period (perhaps to arrange suitable dates or collate information) is necessary in which case the chair must inform the complainant the reason for the delay.

The governors' complaints committee is the last school-based stage of the complaints

process, and is not convened to merely rubber-stamp previous decisions.

Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The governing body should appoint a committee consisting of three or five members (preferably with reserves) with delegated powers to hear complaints at this stage in the complaint process, and set out its terms of reference. These can include: drawing up its procedures; hearing individual complaints; making recommendations on policy as a result of complaints.

If the governing body does not appoint a chair, the panel will choose its own chair.

It would not be appropriate to appoint anyone who works at the school to sit on this committee.

The complainant and the person who is the subject of the complaint (if appropriate) should be permitted to bring a supporter (friend, spouse, union representative, etc) should they so choose.

The Remit of the Complaints Committee

The panel can:

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.

There are several points which any governor sitting on a complaints committee needs to remember:

a) It is important that the committee is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may be a member of the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the committee, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

b) The aim of the meeting, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognized the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the committee does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

c) An effective committee will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.

e) The governors sitting on the committee need to be aware of the complaints procedure.

f) The committee should meet on an annual basis to review the complaints procedure.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Clerk

It is important that any complaints committee meeting which is considering complaints should be clerked. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible; collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting; meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the meeting; record the proceedings; notify all parties of the committee's decision.

It is important that the clerk does not influence in any way the decision taken by the committee and must be seen to be impartial at all times.

The Role of the Chair of the Governing Body

The chair of the governing body shall:

check that the correct procedure has been followed; if a hearing is appropriate, notify the clerk to arrange the meeting.

The Role of the Chair of the Committee

The chair of the committee has a key role, ensuring that: the remit of the committee is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption; the issues are addressed; key findings of fact are made; parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease; the meeting is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy; the committee is open minded and acting independently; no member of the committee has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any

involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure; each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions; written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

Notification of the Committee's Decision

The chair of the committee needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the decision, in writing, with the committee's response; within seven days of the meeting.

Checklist for Complaints Committee Meeting

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

The meeting is part of a formal process.

After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint.

Relevant written statements will be heard by the committee.

The headteacher may question the complainant.

The headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions.

The complainant may question the headteacher.

The panel may ask questions at any point.

The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.

The headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.

Both parties leave together while the committee decides on the issues.

The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel as soon as possible but in any event within a seven day period.

The Complaints Policy will be published on the school website and a copy, on request, will be available from the school office

November 2017

Review date: November 2018