



Love God, Love each other, Love Learning

Sacred Heart Primary School

Learning to Love, Loving to Learn

Love God, Love Each Other, Love Learning

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School and Nursery is just like a family, where everyone is welcomed respected and cared for and where Love is at the heart of everything we do.

SCHOOL COMPLAINTS POLICY and PROCEDURE

December 2017

Introduction

The Headteacher, staff and governors at Sacred Heart RC Primary School work hard to build positive relationships with all parents. This document follows guidance published by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and sets out the staged procedures that the school follows if a complaint is made by a parent.

Scope

In some areas of school life there are statutory arrangements for dealing with complaints. This policy does not cover complaints relating to the following matters:

- Admission of pupils;
- School re-organisation proposals;
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation;
- Exclusion of pupils;
- Whistleblowing;
- Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures;
- Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities;
- Assessments of special educational needs;
- Implementation of the National Curriculum;
- And the provisions of religious education and worship refer to The Catholic Education Service



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See appendix “Best Practice Advice for School Complaint Procedures 2016” as to whom should be contacted in the above instances.

Investigating complaints

The following formal procedures will be invoked when attempts to resolve an issue informally are unsuccessful, and the person raising the concern wishes to take the matter further. The headteacher will have responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure. Where the complaint concerns the headteacher, or a governor, the chair of governors will carry out this role.

At each stage of the complaints procedure, the person investigating the complaint will make sure that they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them;
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- respect confidentiality;
- conduct any interview with an open mind;
- keep notes of the interview.

Individual complaints will 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.

Stage One: Complaint heard by a staff member

If a parent is concerned about anything they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's teacher immediately. Most matters can be dealt with in this way. Teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress. They will always want to know if there is a problem so that they can take action before a child's progress is affected. Where possible the school will respect the views of a complainant who feels unable to discuss a complaint with a particular member of staff and, in such cases, will refer the complaint to the Head. In circumstances where the complaint concerns the Headteacher the complainant will be referred to the chair of governors.

Complaints at this stage of the procedure will be heard within five (5) working days.



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4. Stage Two: Complaint heard by the Headteacher

Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been dealt with at Stage One, the complaint will be referred to the Headteacher (see complaints form at Appendix A). The Headteacher will carry out a thorough investigation, with the support of the Senior Leadership Team when appropriate, of all complaints referred at this stage. Complaints at this stage of the procedure will be heard within five (5) working days.

5. Stage Three: Complaint heard by the Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel

Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint has been dealt with at Stages One and Two, they must write, giving details of the complaint, to the chair of the governing body. The chair of governors will then convene a governing body complaints appeal panel hearing to which the complainant will be invited. The governors' appeal panel is the final stage of the school-based process.

Complaints at this stage of the procedure will be heard within ten (10) working days.

Complainants will be given three (3) days' notice of the date of the appeal hearing and advised, in writing, of the outcome of the Panel hearing within five (5) working days of the date of the hearing.

6. The Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel

The governing body will nominate three or five members with delegated powers to hear complaints at Stage Three of the Complaints Procedure. The governing body will also appoint a clerk to the Complaints Appeal Panel. The panel will choose their own chair. The appeal panel's terms of reference are to:

- Hear individual appeals;
- Follow the procedures set out at **paragraph two** of this document;
- Make recommendations on school policy and/or practice as a result of complaints.

The governors will do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction.

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 school procedures/practices to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not occur.

If the governing body complaints appeal panel is unable to resolve a complaint it may be referred to the LEA for investigation of how the complaint was handled.



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7. Managing and Recording Complaints

The headteacher will have responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure and will hold records centrally. A complaint can be made in person or in writing. The Headteacher will log all complaints received by the school and record how they were resolved. Staff will keep brief notes of meetings and telephone calls.

8. Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on an annual basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary.

9. Publication of the Complaints Procedure

Details of this complaints procedure are included on the school web site and available from the school office



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Appendix A

Please complete and return to the Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Name:	Address:		
Contact Telephone:			
Pupils name:	Relationship to Pupil:		
Details of complaint:			
Actions already taken to resolve the complaint (e.g. who have you spoken to and what was the response):			
What actions might resolve the problem at this stage?			
Do you wish to include any paper work? If so, please give details.			
Signature:		Date:	
<i>For official use:</i>			
Date acknowledged:	By who:	Complaint referred to:	Date of referral:
Outcome of complaint:			



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Date:	Name of Complainant:
Nature of complaint:	
Action to be taken:	
Signed: Headteacher	
Signed: Parent / Guardian / Carer	



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Guidance for Appeal Panel Members

The Complaints Appeal Panel

It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. When setting up the panel, the governing body must try to ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

The aim of the hearing, 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 recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

An effective panel 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.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Chair of Governors will:

- Check that the correct procedure has been followed
- If a hearing is appropriate, notify the clerk to arrange the panel

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant in matters relating to the appeal panel hearing.

The Clerk 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.
- Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing
- Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing
- Record the proceedings
- Notify all parties of the panel's decision.



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The Chair of the Panel will ensure that:

- No member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- The remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- The issues are addressed;
- 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.
- 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 hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- The panel is open minded and acting independently;
- The complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, within the deadline published in the complaints procedure. The letter will explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed



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Checklist for the Panel Hearing

- The hearing should be as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- 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 panel decides on the issues.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within the set time scale.