

**St. Joseph’s Catholic**

**infant school**



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE POLICY

STATUTORY POLICY

**THIS POLICY WAS REVIEWED/ADOPTED:**

**December 2012**

**This Policy will be reviewed**

`St. Joseph's Infant School is a Catholic School of the Diocese of Menevia. Our mission is to provide a Christian community where the Catholic Faith is taught and nurtured and where all may live and work together to achieve the highest academic standards.

Specifically we aim to:-

1. Provide an education that develops both the spiritual and the academic aspects of each individual.

2. Celebrate through prayer, liturgy and worship allowing pupils and staff to develop and grow in their love of God.

3. To foster Christian values in an environment which encourages the understanding of the needs of everyone.

4. To be witnesses of Christ's values to the wider world.

5. Continue to develop close relationships between, home, school and parish.

We believe our Catholic School is more than just an environment for providing a series of lessons. We strive to meet the needs of young people of today in the light of the Church’s faith in Jesus Christ. As a result, all that happens in our school, the curriculum, the discipline and our relationships, speaks to us of God’s loving care for each individual involved in the School’s life.

The fostering of true attitudes and thoughtfulness for other people and the development of Christian values and beliefs will be our objective. This will be exemplified by a concern for justice, a fostering of talents of the whole school community and serving those who have special needs.

Parents, Staff and Governors work together to provide a school with a happy, secure, well-ordered and stimulating environment where Christian values are seen to be important and parents are proud to send their children.

At times concerns may arise and it is our obligation to ensure that each concern is valued and dealt with.

This policy aims to set out the procedures involved if a complaint arises.

The purpose of our complaints procedure is to provide a framework in which:

* Parents are clear about how they can express concerns and how they will be responded to.
* The school is clear about the differences between a concern and a complaint. Informal complaints are taken seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.
* School staff and governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities in responding to concerns.
* General complaints only are considered. It cannot cover every eventuality. Complaints about admissions and exclusions; SEN together with matters surrounding; staff grievance, disciplinary procedures and curriculum complaints procedures are catered for by separate and specific protocols.
* Concerns and complaints can be resolved informally and speedily by the' member of staff (or the headteacher) with whom the parent makes first contact. {Please note that stages 1 & 2 of the complaints procedure are deemed as being an informal process of resolving a complaint}
* Parents are aware of the appropriate person to contact in the first instance.
* Parents are given information as to how they can raise concerns with the school.
  + Matters are dealt with in a professional but informal manner.

If a governor, including the Chair of Governors, is approached by a parent directly with a complaint at this stage, the governor will refer the parent to the headteacher.

### **Stage 1 - Complaint heard by staff member (Initial concern)**

* Concerns and complaints may be resolved following the initial contact.
* In all cases, members of staff dealing with the complaint will make a note of the date and details of the complaint on the Complaints Log (see appendix A)
* All discussions and/or outcomes between the complainant and staff member at this stage should be logged as evidence on the Complaints Log.
* If it appears that the discussions are not going to lead to resolution and/or the complainant indicates that they are dissatisfied with the response, the staff member will inform the complainant of the next stage of the procedure.

If the complaint is about the action of the headteacher, the matter must be referred to the chair of governors.

Stage Two - Headteacher's Investigation

* Parents who wish to pursue a complaint to Stage Two will be asked to put the complaint in writing to the school, (see appendix B). If the complainant is unable to put the matter into writing this should be drawn to the attention of the person receiving the complaint so that alternative arrangements can be made for the submission of the complaint. The headteacher (or designated member of staff) will acknowledge the complaint in writing usually within **five working days** of receipt, giving a brief explanation of the complaints procedures and a target date for providing a response. This is usually **within** **fifteen working days**. If it is not possible to deal with the matter in this time, the complainant will be informed of when it is likely to be happen.
* The headteacher (or designated member of staff) will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet her. The complainant should, if he/she wishes, be allowed to be accompanied by a friend or relative who could speak on his/her behalf. Interpreting facilities should be made available if required.
* If necessary, the headteacher (or designated member of staff) will interview any witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres around a pupil, the pupil may also be interviewed, normally with his/her parent/guardian present. In some circumstances this may not be possible and a senior member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should attend with him/her. If a member of staff is the cause of the complaint, they need to be made aware of the reasons, have an opportunity to respond and be accompanied by a representative if required.
* The headteacher (or designated member of staff) will ensure that written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation are kept.
* Once all the relevant facts have been established, the headteacher (or designated member of staff) will arrange a meeting with the complainant to discuss or resolve the matter. This meeting will be followed up with a letter setting out the outcome of the meeting. The complainant will be advised in this letter that if they wish to take the complaint further he/she should notify the chair of governors within fifteen working days of receiving the letter detailing the facts.
* The complainant should receive a full copy of the complaints procedure.
* **If the complaint is against the action of the headteacher, the chair of governors (or designated governor) should carry out all the Stage Two procedures**. **If the matter progresses to Stage Three the Chair would hand over responsibility to the Vice Chair or designated governor.**

#### Stage 3 - Review by Governing\_Body

Complaints only rarely reach this formal stage, but it is important that governing bodies are prepared to deal with them when necessary. {*It should be noted that Stages* 1 *and* 2 *must be completed before this stage is reached}.*

Formal complaints to the governing body should be made in writing to the chair of governors. The chair of governors will ask the clerk to the governing body to acknowledge the complaint and to make arrangements for a meeting of the committee of the governing body charged with dealing with complaints. (The governing body will set up a Complaints Committee to investigate the complaint. If the complaint is proved this could lead to disciplinary action. This would be dealt with in accordance with the school's appropriate procedures).

The governing body will take care that no governor can be accused of prejudice by ensuring that:

* An individual governor does not deal with the complaint;
* The complaint is quickly referred to a committee charged with dealing with complaints or to the head teacher, if complaint procedures at that level have not been exhausted;
* The complaint is not reported to the whole governing body until it is resolved, and then not in detail
* All parties to the complaint are given a fair hearing. It is important that a person against whom a complaint is made is given sufficient time; usually 10 school days, to consider all the evidence and take advice before providing a response and before the hearing takes place.
* The decision of the committee is given in writing to the complainant and any person against whom the complaint is made usually within five school days of the hearing, setting out the reasons for the decision and any remedial action to be taken by the school.
* The letter also advises the complainant that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the procedure they may write to the LEA, the Diocese, and if applicable the Welsh Assembly Government.
* **This further review will however only consider whether the complaint has been fully and fairly considered according to the school's complaints procedures. It will not rehear the substantive complaint or change the decision already made.**

**Governing Body Complaints Procedure**

The following protocols should be followed upon receipt of a written request from the complainant for the complaint to proceed to Stage Three.

1. The clerk to the governing body should write acknowledging receipt of the written request usually within **5 working days** and informing the complainant that it will be heard by a committee of the governing body usually within **fifteen working days** of receipt. The letter should also inform the complainant that they have the right to submit any further documents relevant to their complaint and that these must be received in order for the committee members to be sent copies at least **five working days** prior to the meeting.
2. The clerk to the governing body should convene a meeting of the complaints committee. In establishing the committee the governing body should nominate a pool of five governors from which three can be drawn for any hearing. This will ensure that there are always sufficient governors with no conflict of interest to constitute the committee when required. The committee should elect its chair.
3. The committee members should have had no prior involvement with the complaint. Generally, **it would not be appropriate for the headteacher to have a place on the committee.** Governing bodies should have regard to the advantages of having a mix of different type of governor on the committee and be sensitive to issues of equal opportunity in the composition of the committee.
4. All relevant correspondence and documentation should be given to each committee member. The chairperson of the committee should ensure that the complainant, headteacher and any other witnesses are given five working days notice in writing of:­
   1. The time and place of the committee meeting.
   2. The grounds of the complaint together with copies of all documents relied upon by either the complainant or headteacher.
   3. The right of both parties to be accompanied or represented by a person of their choice.
   4. The committee's option to proceed in the absence of the complainant/headteacher or their representative if no good reason is given why they should not do so.
5. The chairperson of the committee should ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.
6. The aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it may only be possible to establish the facts of a situation and make recommendations about future action, which will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has been taken seriously.
7. The chairperson of the committee should try and ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible and that the complainant feels at ease.
8. The committee will conduct the meeting having regard to the following principal steps. It shall be a rule that the committee shall not see one party in the absence of the other except in a case where the committee has resolved to proceed in the absence of the complainant/ headteacher in circumstances outlined in paragraph 4.(iv) above:­
   1. The complainant/representative will open by outlining the complaint and present any documentary evidence and/or call witness( es) as appropriate.
   2. The Headteacher/representative may ask questions of the complainant/representative or of any witness called by him/her. (N.B. This opportunity is reserved for asking questions to clarify matters not for making statements. )
   3. Members of the committee may ask questions similarly.
   4. The Headteacher/representative will respond to the complaint, present the documentary evidence and/or call witness(es).
   5. The complainant/representative may ask questions of the Headteacher/representative or of any witness called by him/her. (N.B. This opportunity is reserved for asking questions to clarify matters not for making statements. )
   6. Members of the committee may ask questions similarly.
   7. At the conclusion of the meeting, the chairperson of the committee should explain that the committee will consider its decision and write to both parties with the outcome within five working days. The headteacher and any witnesses should then withdraw and the committee should consider its decision. This should include:
      1. a decision on the complaint
      2. appropriate action to be taken by the school, and where appropriate,
      3. recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.

The school should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes is kept on file in the school. **This should be held separately from pupils' personal records.**

**This Policy will be reviewed as and when required.**

**Stage 3** – Review by Governing Body

* Issue letter inviting complainant to meeting
* Issue letter confirming panel decision
* Ensure complaints co-ordinator informed of outcome

Issue not resolved

Issue resolved

**Stage 2** – Headteacher’s Investigation

* Acknowledge receipt of complaint
* Write to complainant with outcome of investigation
* Ensure complaints co-ordinator informed of outcome

Issue not resolved

Issue resolved

**Stage 1** - Complaint heard by staff member

* Ensure complaints co-ordinator informed of outcome

**Flowchart**

**Summary of Dealing with Complaints**

**Annex B**

**Please complete and return to Ms. J. Beaumont, Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.**

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| --- |
| **Your name:** |
| **Pupil’s name:** |
| **Your relationship to the pupil:** |
| **Address:**  **Postcode:**  **Day time telephone number:**  **Evening telephone number:** |
| **Please give details of your complaint.** |
| **What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.**  **(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?** |
| **What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?** |
| **Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.** |
| **Signature:**  **Date:** |
| **Official use**  **Date acknowledgement sent:**  **By who:**  **Complaint referred to:**  **Date:** |

**Complaints Log**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Pupils Name** | **Complaint received by** | **Acknowledgement letter sent** | **Details of Complaint** | **Complaint dealt with by** | **Outcome and date resolved** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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