

The Federation of St Bede's and St Bernadette Catholic Schools



St Bede's Catholic Infant & Nursery School

Complaints Policy 2018-2020

Policy Review and Development

Updated: March 2018
To be reviewed: March 2020



Complaints Policy

Our mission as Catholic schools is to provide the highest possible quality of education for all our pupils, delivered within the context of the Gospel values and the teachings of the Church, within our Christian community.

To achieve this end the Governing Board commits itself to the following:

- Recognising the value and uniqueness of every student
- Ensuring the school is a safe place to be and one where the interests of justice are served
- Creating a community which is inclusive, one whose basis is mutual respect and equality
- Maintaining the long tradition of trust, co-operation and courtesy
- Generating good order and discipline

We all work very hard to build positive relationships with all our parents. We encourage and welcome all comments and views. Our aim is to deal with issues and concerns before they become a 'complaint'. We understand that in any community, things sometimes go wrong. The Governing Board and the Head teachers recognise the value to all concerned of dealing fairly, honestly and effectively with any complaint against their decisions, actions or omissions, which a pupil or parent or other aggrieved person may have. To this end, they have adopted the underlying principles and procedures set out in this document.

General Principles

- The procedure is designed to ensure that wherever possible, an informal resolution is attempted
- All stages of the complaints procedure should be investigatory rather than adversarial
- To allow for a proper investigation, complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of, will not be considered, save in exceptional circumstances.

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is a clear expression of dissatisfaction, however made, by a person or persons with a legitimate interest in the school (but not being employed at the school or on the governing board) about the standard of teaching, the conduct, actions, or lack of action, of members of the teaching or non teaching staff employed at the school and anybody else working under the direction of the Headteacher, which affects an individual or group.

Complaints about persons outside of the school will initially be dealt with by the Headteacher and be referred to the appropriate authority.

Anonymous complaints

There is no duty for Headteachers or Governing Board to pursue anonymous complaints because there is no named complainant to respond to. However, if such complaints allege or imply a serious matter that may be to the detriment of the school, then it will be at the Headteacher's discretion to consider whether a case needs further investigation or not. Further investigation may be carried out in exceptional circumstances such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school would involve appropriate external agencies.



Vexatious Complaints

There will be occasions when, on proper investigation a complaint is deemed to be unfounded, malicious or vexatious or when despite all stages of the procedure having been followed the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to reopen the same issue. In these circumstances the Chair of the Governing Board will inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is closed.

The complaints procedure

Your rights as a person making a complaint

In dealing with your complaint we will ensure that you receive:

- *Fair treatment
- *Courtesy
- *A timely response
- *Accurate advice
- *Respect for your privacy – concerns will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility that we may have to consult with other appropriate agencies about your complaint
- *Reasons for our decisions

Where there are grounds to your complaint we will acknowledge this and address the issues you have raised.

Similarly, we will ensure that you are advised where we believe that there are no grounds to your complaint.

Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint

In raising an issue we would expect that you:

- *Raise issues in a timely manner
- *Treat our staff as professionals, in a non-threatening manner and with respect and courtesy
- *Provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issue you raise
- *Use these procedures fully and to engage in them at the appropriate levels

We would expect you to have reasonable grounds for making a complaint and not be seeking to invoke these or other procedures as a means of dealing with issues that are more appropriately dealt with in other ways.



Making a complaint

<p>Stage 1 Informal expression of concern made to the school In the first instance, the matter should be discussed with the child's class teacher so that they may be allowed an opportunity to address the issue, as in many instances concerns can arise through a simple misunderstanding.</p>	<p>If you have any concerns please make an appointment to see your child's teacher via the school office. All members of staff know how to refer, if necessary, to the appropriate person with responsibility for particular issues raised by you. They will make a clear note of the details and will check later to make sure that the matter has been followed up and resolved.</p>
<p>Stage 2 Informal – speaking with the Headteacher</p>	<p>If the matter has not been resolved and needs further investigation parents should arrange a meeting with either of the Headteacher. You should let the person you are going to meet with know in advance the nature of your concerns, so that they can prepare for the meeting. In some circumstances the matter will not be able to be dealt with immediately and time will be needed to investigate and prepare a proper response.</p>
<p>Stage 3 Formal – Writing to the Headteacher</p>	<p>If it your concern has not been addressed at stages 1 and/or 2 you should write a letter addressed to the Headteacher and marked 'private and confidential' The letter should be as concise as possible and address the issue that is of immediate concern to you. (If a complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, and other related documentation) You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 3 working days and will provide a response to the issues raised or indicate that your concerns are being fully investigated and the time frame against which you can expect a response (a maximum of 20 working days) You may be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint. Following the meeting the Headteacher will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements. If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law. Written records of all meetings and telephone conversations will be kept by the Headteacher</p>
<p>Stage 4 Formal – In writing to Governor Sub- Committee (Complaints Review panel)</p>	<p>If a complaint is not resolved in a satisfactory manner and all previous stages have been explored, you may write a letter addressed to the Co- Chairs of Governors, who will bring your complaint to a Governors' sub-committee, which will investigate and respond to your complaint. If the Governors consider from your letter that the complaint warrants further investigation they may ask you to explain your case in person before a specially appointed panel. (they will indicate a time, place, date for the meeting to be held within 20 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received. You</p>



	<p>will then receive a written response within a further 10 working days of the meeting having been held.) However, it is also possible that, following investigation, they may make a decision without needing you to appear. A written statement outlining the decision will be sent to the Headteacher and yourself within 10 working days.</p>
Appeals Process – Full Board of Governors	<p>If you still believe your complaint has not been addressed you may write to the Chair of Governors requesting to meet with the full board of governors to appeal the outcomes. You will be invited to attend the next suitable scheduled meeting of Governors where your appeal will be heard. You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. Since the process is consultative in nature and not adversarial, a complainant will not have the right to be accompanied or represented by any other person, unless it is deemed appropriate by the Board of Governors. This meeting will normally take place within 30 working days of your appeal request having been received. Following this meeting you will receive a written response within 10 working days. This will indicate the Governors' findings, recommendations and reasons supporting their decisions.</p>

Managing and recording Complaints

Record keeping

The Headteacher should ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls will be kept confidentially and a copy of any written response, addressing all points and issues raised, will be added to the records.

All such records will be destroyed five years after the date of the last correspondence on the issue.

Monitoring and Review

The Governing Board will review the details of complaints, which will be reported on a regular to them by the Headteacher. This will be done to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary.

Complaints information shared with the whole Governing Board will not name individuals.

As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to school improvement. When individual complaints are heard, schools may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the School and the Governing Board will be used to evaluate the school's performance.



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Closure of complaints

We will do all we can to help to resolve a complaint against the School but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the Complainant's wishes.

If a Complainant persists in making representations to the School this can be extremely time-consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in our care.

For this reason we are entitled to close correspondence on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint.

Publicising the Procedure

There is a legal requirement for the Complaints Procedures to be publicised.

This document is available to new parents when their children join the school and on the school website.

Signed:

Headteacher: _____

Chair of Governors: _____

Date agreed: March 2018

Date to be reviewed: March 2020



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Appendix 1

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School Complaint Form (for Stage 1 complaints)

If you have tried unsuccessfully to resolve your complaint and wish to take the matter further, please complete this form and send it to the Headteacher. (If your complaint is against the Headteacher you will need to send the form to the Chair of the Governing Board)

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code _____

Telephone Number (Home): _____

Telephone Number (Day): _____

Telephone Number (Mobile): _____

Name of Child: _____

Date of Birth of Child: _____

What is your complaint about and what would you like the Headteacher to do?

Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

When did you discuss your concern/complaint with the appropriate member of staff?

Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

What was the result of the discussion?

Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____



Appendix 2

Complaint made in Writing to the Headteacher – Acknowledgement

Dear

Thank you for your letter ofin which you outlined your concerns regarding
.....

Option A

I have investigated the various aspects of your complaint and would respond as follows
.....
.....

Option B

I hope that you will appreciate that I need some time in order to investigate your concerns to respond as fully as possible to the issues you have raised. I will write to you again within the next 10 working days.

Option C

It would be extremely helpful if you could contact the school in order to arrange a suitable time for a meeting to discuss your complaint. This will help me to investigate your concerns and to respond as fully as possible to the issues you have raised.
I will write to you again within 10 working days of that meeting.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher



Complaint made in Writing to Headteacher – Response following meeting

Dear.....

Thank you for attending our meeting on in which we discussed your concerns regarding.....
.....

Following that meeting and my own investigations into the various aspects of your complaint, I would respond as follows:

.....
.....

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention and to assure you that the school always welcomes your contribution.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher



Complaint made in Writing to Chairperson of Governors – Acknowledgement

Dear

Thank you for your letter ofin which you outlined your concerns regarding
.....
.....

I have referred your complaint to a Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors for investigation and response to the various aspects of your complaint.

Option A

I hope that you will appreciate that the Sub-Committee will need some time in order to investigate your concerns to respond as fully as possible to the issues you have raised. The Sub-Committee will write to you with their response within the next 25 working days.

Option B

I hope that you will appreciate that the Sub-Committee will need some time in order to investigate your concerns. Indeed, it would be extremely helpful if you could attend a meeting of the Sub-Committee to discuss your complaint onatpm in..... school. This will help the Sub-Committee to investigate your concerns and to respond as fully as possible to the issues you have raised. The Sub-Committee will write to you with their response within 10 working days of that meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Chairperson of the Board of Governors



Outcome of Review Panel Investigation meeting

Dear.....

Option A – No Meeting Needed

Thank you for your letter ofin which you outlined your concerns regarding.....

I have investigated the various aspects of your complaint and would respond as follows:

.....

Option B – Meeting with Sub-Committee

Thank you for attending our meeting on in which we discussed your concerns regarding.....

.....

Following that meeting and the Sub-Committee's own investigations into the various aspects of your complaint, I would respond as follows:

.....

Both Options

Our reasons for coming to our decision are
Finally, on behalf of the Governors' Sub-Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for bringing your concerns to our attention and to assure you that the school continues to welcome your contribution.

Yours sincerely

Chairperson of the Governor Sub-Committee for Complaints



Appeal

Request to Appeal – Acknowledgement

Dear

Thank you for your letter of.....in which you set out the grounds for appealing the previous outcomes to your complaint regarding

.....
.....

I have referred your complaint to the Board of Governors for them to investigate and respond to the various aspects of your complaint. To this end I have arranged for your case to be considered at the next meeting of the Board of Governors, which takes place on at.....pm inschool.

You should attend this meeting so that you can have an opportunity to put forward your case in detail.

This will help the Board of Governors to consider all aspects of your concerns and then to respond as fully as possible to the issues you have raised. You will receive a full written response within 10 working days of that meeting.

Yours sincerely

Chairperson of the Board of Governors



Appeal

Outcome of full Board of Governor Meeting

Dear.....

Thank you for attending the Board of Governor meeting onin which you outlined your concerns in respect of
.....

Following that meeting and our own investigations into various aspects of your complaint, I would respond as follows

Our reasons for coming to our decision are

In relation to the general handling of your complaint I would comment as follows.....

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for bringing your concerns to our attention and to assure you that the Board of Governors and school staff continue to welcome your contribution to school life.

Yours sincerely

Chairperson of the Board of Governors



Discourteous or Threatening Behaviour Towards a Member of Staff

Dear.....

I have been informed of a regrettable incident when you attended the school on.....to discuss your concerns with a member of staff.

Whilst I understand that your visit was prompted by a perceived complaint in relation to the member of staff with whom you spoke, I regret that I must insist that you do not re-enter school premises for any reason without first contacting the Headteacher to arrange your visit.

This decision has been taken so as to protect the pupils and staff in the school and to avoid the potential for a further similar incident, which could have other more serious consequences.

In the meantime, I would encourage you to read the enclosed School's Complaints Procedure in relation to your original issue.

Yours sincerely

Chairperson of the Board of Governors