



St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Complaints Policy

Date: September 2017

Date to be reviewed: Autumn 2018

Person responsible: Miss M Jackson

Rationale

Governing Bodies are required to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school.

The policy and procedures aim to ensure that the difference between concerns and complaints is clearly understood and that both are raised, handled promptly, fairly and in a manner that is perceived to be thorough and objective by parents.

The policy and procedures relate to general parental complaints. Complaints relating to admissions, exclusions or Special Educational Needs provision will normally be handled by separate, statutory mechanisms and certain complaints eg staff grievance and discipline procedures, fall outside the scope of this general complaints policy and procedures.

Aims

At St Mary's, we aim to be a caring, positive, supportive and listening school which provides high quality care, education and therapeutic provision to meet children's individual needs, enhance self-esteem and maximise personal and educational progress. We aim to provide a warm, welcoming environment where all members of the school community feel valued and respected as individuals; where there is good communication, an openness and willingness to listen and where parents/carers feel sufficiently comfortable and confident in raising any difficulties, concerns and complaints they may have.

We aim to:

- listen to the views of parents/carers about their children's education and well-being
- take informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage;
- handle all complaints, if possible, without the need for formal procedures in a fair, impartial and non-adversarial manner;
- take any complaint seriously, address all the points at issue and provide a thorough and appropriate response and appropriate redress where necessary;
- handle all complaints swiftly within established time limits, keeping all concerned of progress as the complaint is being dealt with;

- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- invoke and follow formal procedures when initial attempts to resolve issues are unsuccessful and the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further;
- learn from any mistakes or weaknesses in order to improve further the standards of education and care offered by the school;
- ensure that children are not penalised or intimidated as a result of his/her parent or carer making a complaint;
- ensure there are clear and detailed procedures for handling complaints which are available to parents/carers in an accessible, easily understood format;
- respect individual's desire for confidentiality;

Equal Opportunities

At St Mary's we value every one of our children and staff. We celebrate diversity and are committed to countering all forms of discrimination (whether by individuals or systems), particularly those that result in inequalities and injustices. We will, through the Complaints Policy and Procedures, foster an ethos of openness, good communication, transparency and fairness.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- ensuring the policy and procedures are in place;
- monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation and effectiveness of the policy and procedures annually;
- not discussing individual complaints and, on receipt of a complaint, directing the complainant to the school's complaints procedures and leaflet.

The Headteacher is the nominated member of staff with responsibility for the operation and management of the Complaints policy and procedures. The Headteacher is responsible for:

- ensuring the policy and procedures are effectively implemented;
- ensuring that staff and parents are aware of and informed about the Complaints policy and procedures;
- ensuring that the policy is publicised on the school's website and that information is given to new parents when their children join the school;
- ensuring that all complaints are logged;
- ensuring that complaints are handled fairly and objectively within designated time frames.

All staff are responsible for:

- being available to discuss and help parents with problems and concerns;
- informing the Headteacher and/or Assistant Headteachers of concerns and complaints raised by parents or carers.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Headteacher will report annually to the Governing Body, summarising the numbers and types of formal complaints received, together with outcomes. The policy will be reviewed annually, looking at impact and effectiveness.

This review will be led by the designated member of staff with responsibility for the operation and management of the complaints policy and procedures.

COMPLAINTS BY PARENTS

Introduction

We aim to provide your child with the best possible education and meet his or her needs as well as we can. However, in any school, parents may occasionally feel concerned about something or have a complaint. If this is the case we want to hear from you.

What is a complaint? It can be a concern or problem or feeling of dissatisfaction that you have about an aspect of our work.

What do I do if I have a complaint? Tell a member of staff. Preferably speak with the member of staff most knowledgeable of the facts of the matter. That person will talk it over with you and try to sort things out by discussing your complaint and seeking to resolve the matter.

Certain specific complaints are handled differently:

- if your child is refused admission to the school you have a statutory right to appeal to an independent appeals panel. The school will be able to give you details;
- if your child has been excluded for between 5 and 15 school days, you have a right to make representation to the Governing Body. If your child has been permanently excluded you have the right to an independent appeal.

What do I do if I feel my complaint hasn't been sorted out?

You may contact the school office and ask for an appointment to see the Headteacher. The Headteacher will listen carefully and ask you any questions to help her understand the situation fully. She will probably then need to talk to other people, but will get in touch with you as soon as she is able to respond fully. This is referred to as the **informal stage** of the Complaints procedure.

If I feel unhappy with what the Headteacher says, what can I do then?

You may then write to the Chair of Governors, at the school address, setting out your complaint and why you are unhappy with the school's response. Please write within 14 days of receiving the Headteacher's response. The Chair of Governors may invite you for an informal meeting to discuss your complaint. If not, the Chair of Governors will then write once he/she has investigated more fully. You should receive a full response within 14 days. This is still referred to as the **informal stage** of the Complaints procedure.

What happens if I am unhappy about the Chair of Governors' response?

You are entitled to ask a panel of Governors to meet to consider your complaint. If you want to do this, write to the Chair or Clerk to the Governing body within 14 days of receiving the Chair's response. Say that you have a formal complaint and that you remain unhappy with the way the school and Chair of Governors have responded, and that you would like a panel of governors to consider your complaint. There is no need to write all the details of the complaint in this letter but you will be required to explain clearly what you are complaining about. The Clerk will contact you about the panel and explain what will happen. You may bring someone with you if you wish. This part of the procedure is referred to as the **formal stage** of the Complaints procedure.

What happens at the Panel meeting?

One of the Governors will chair the meeting, and will explain what will happen. You may be asked to outline your complaint. Panel members and/or the Head teacher who will also be present, may ask you questions. The Head teacher will then explain how the school has responded to the complaint, and then you and the panel may ask the Headteacher questions. You may also ask other people (witnesses) to speak about what happened.

After this, everyone except the panel and the person taking minutes will leave, so that the panel can consider its findings. The Chair of the panel will write to you within a few days setting out the panel's findings. They will also write to the Headteacher and Chair of Governors. Their findings are binding upon the school.

The panel's findings are the school's final response to you about your complaint. If you are still unhappy you could write to the Secretary of State for Education, but again there is no power to intervene unless the Governing Body has acted unreasonably or has failed to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.