



Saint Joseph's
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

School Complaints Procedure

(Version 1.1 January 2017)

Success Criteria:

Context/Aim:

All schools are required to have a Complaints policy. The values of the governing body of St. Joseph's Catholic School are expressed in the school's Vision Statement.

Monitoring Procedures:

By Whom:

Governors' Pastoral & Ethos Committee

When:

Biennially

How:

Report from Head

Evaluation:

By Whom:

Governors Pastoral & Ethos committee

When:

Biennially

How:

Review at meetings

Revision History:

<u>Version</u>	<u>Approved and Ratified</u>	<u>Review Date</u>	<u>Additional notes</u>
1.1	January 2017	January 2019	None
1.0	October 2015	October 2016	Complete re-write

Vision Statement:

St Joseph's is a co-educational, 11-16 Catholic voluntary-aided school in the diocese of Clifton and the county of Wiltshire. Our aim is to provide a caring educational environment where each person is valued and is given the dignity due to a child of God.

At the heart of our school is the Christian vision of the human person. We want each member of our community to grow as an individual witness to the gospel values of love, truth and justice. We want each pupil to be healthy in mind, body and spirit.

Each member of our community should feel safe and secure in the learning environment. We aim to develop a sense of self-discipline and responsibility in our pupils. Everyone in our community should show respect for themselves, respect for others and respect for the environment.

We believe that each pupil should have the opportunity to enjoy and achieve to their full potential. We are committed to praising and celebrating achievement. We want our pupils to have high expectations of themselves to understand the value of service to others and our responsibility as stewards of the environment. Everyone has a contribution to make in helping to build the common good. We aim to equip our pupils with the ability to make good choices in their lives based on the positive relationships and values they have learned in St Joseph's.

We aim to help each of our pupils to develop morally and spiritually. We want them to achieve economic well-being while being mindful of the needs of others who are less fortunate.

We are committed to aspiring for excellence in all that we do for the sake of the gospel.

Head teacher

National Policies and guidance/courses referred to and incorporated into SJCS Policy:

School Complaints Toolkit 2014

Other SJCS Policies that relate to this Policy:

Whistleblowing Policy

Parent Code of Conduct

St Joseph's Catholic School procedures for dealing with complaints

The majority of concerns from parents, carers and other are handled under the following general procedures.

The procedure is divided into 3 stages:

- **The informal stage** aims to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in school
- **Stage One** is the first formal stage at which written complaints are considered by the head teacher or the designated governor, who has special responsibility for dealing with complaints
- **Stage Two** is the next stage once stage One has been worked through. It involves a complaints appeal panel of governors

How each of these stages operates is explained below:

Informal Stage – your contact with the school

1. Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you make them known to us. The first point of contact should be your child's tutor or subject teacher. Alternatively you can contact your child's Head of House.
2. Once your concern is made known to us, we will see you, or contact you by telephone or in writing, as soon as possible. If it is necessary, all members of staff know how to refer to the appropriate person with responsibility for your particular issue. He or she will make a clear note of the details and will check later to make sure that the matter has been followed up.
3. Any actions or monitoring of the situation that has been agreed, will be communicated clearly either verbally at the meeting or in writing.
4. If necessary we will contact appropriate people who may be able to assist us with our enquires into your concern.
5. We will normally update you on the progress of our enquiries with 10 school days. Once we have responded to your concern, you will have the opportunity of asking for the matter to be considered further.
6. If you are still dissatisfied following this informal approach, your concern will become a formal complaint and will be dealt with at the next stage.

Stage One – formal consideration of your complaint

This stage in our procedures deals with written complaints. It applies where you are not happy with the informal approach to dealing with your concern, as outlined above.

1. Your written complaint should be addressed to the head teacher. If however, your complaint concerns the head teacher personally, it should be sent to the school marked *"for the attention of the Chair of Governors"*
2. We will acknowledge your complaint in writing as soon as possible after receiving it.
3. We will enclose a copy of these procedures with the acknowledgment.
4. Normally we would expect to respond in full within 15 school days but if this is not possible we will write to explain the reason for the delay and let you know when we hope to have a full response.
5. As part of our consideration of your complaint, we may invite you in to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any details required. If you wish, you can ask someone

- to accompany you to help you explain the reasons for your complaint.
6. The head teacher, or Chair or Governors may also be accompanied by a suitable person if they wish.
 7. Following the meeting, the head teacher, investigating officer or Chair of Governors will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, we will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question
 8. We will normally talk to pupils with another member of staff present.
 9. If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal procedures, as required by law.
 10. The head teacher, senior staff or the Chair of Governors will keep written/typed, signed and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation.
 11. Once we have established all the relevant facts, we will send you a written response to your complaint. This will give an explanation of the head teachers or Chair of Governors decision and the reasons for it. If follow-up action is needed, we will indicate what we are proposing to do. We may invite you to a meeting to discuss the outcome as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations with you.
 12. The person investigating your complaint may decide that we have done all we can to resolve the complaint, in which case we may use our discretion to close the complaint at this point.
 13. If you are unhappy with the way in which we have reached our conclusions, you may wish to proceed to Stage Two, as described below.

Stage Two – consideration by a governors appeal panel

- If the complaint has already been through Stage One and you are not happy with the outcome as a result of the way in which the complaint has been handled, you can take it further to a governors appeal panel. This is a formal process.
- The purpose of this arrangement is to give you the chance to present your arguments in front of a panel of governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the case and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.
- However, the aim of a panel is not to rehear the complaint. It is there to review how the complaint has been investigated and to determine whether this has been conducted fairly. It is there to establish facts and make recommendations which will reassure you that we have taken the complaint seriously.

The governors appeal panel operates according to the following formal procedures:

1. The governing body will convene a panel of 3 governors and will aim to arrange the panel meeting to take place within 20 school days.
2. You will be asked whether you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your appeal.
3. The head teacher or complaint investigator will be asked to prepare a pack of the documentation related to the investigation and the outcome for the panel. The panel can request additional information from other sources if necessary. Please understand that any decision to share the documentation with you, the complainant, is a matter for the panels discretion and you do not have an automatic right to see or receive a copy as the documentation is the property of the governing body. Since such documents usually

name individuals, they are understandably of a sensitive and, therefore, confidential nature.

4. You will be informed, at least 5 working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting.
5. With the letter, you will receive any relevant correspondence or reports regarding Stage One and you will be asked whether you wish to submit further written evidence to the panel. Any additional documentation must be submitted prior to the review panel.
6. The letter will explain what will happen at the panel meeting and that you are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. They are there to give you support but also to witness the proceedings and to speak on your behalf if you wish.
7. If it is necessary in the interests of the ratifying the investigation process, the complaint investigator may, with the agreement of the chair of the panel, invite relevant witnesses directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting.
8. The chair of the meeting will bear in mind that the formal nature of the meeting can be intimidating for you and will do his or her best to put you at your ease.
9. As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.
10. The chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. Please understand that any decision to share the minutes with you, the complainant, is a matter for the panels discretion and you do not have an automatic right to see or receive a copy as the minutes are the property of the governing body. Since such minutes usually name individuals, they are understandably of a sensitive and, therefore, confidential nature.
11. Normally, the written outcome of the panel meeting, which will be sent to you, should give you all the information you require. If, however, you feel that you would like to have a copy of the minutes it would be helpful if you could indicate this in advance. If the panel is happy for the minutes to be copied to you, the clerk can then be asked to maintain confidentiality in the minutes.

During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:

- The panel to hear you explain your case and your argument for why it should be heard at Stage Two.
 - The panel to hear the complaint investigator's case in response.
 - For you to raise any questions via the chair.
 - You to be questioned by the complaint investigator through the chair.
 - The panel members to be able to question you and the complaint investigator.
 - You and the head teacher/complaint investigator to make a final statement.
12. In closing the meeting, the chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to you and the head teacher with 7 school days. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.
 13. The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:
 - Reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the case.
 - Decide on the appropriate action to be taken.
 - Recommend where appropriate, to the governing body changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.

14. The clerk will send you and the head teacher a letter outlining the decision of the panel. The letter will also explain that you are entitled to have the handling of the complaint reviewed by the Secretary of State for Education.
15. We will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the school's records but separate from pupils' personal records.

Closure of complaints

- Very occasionally, a school and/or the LA will feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied.
- We, and the LA where appropriate, 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. Sometimes it is simply a case of "agree to disagree".
- If a complainant persists in making representation to the school – to the head teacher, designated governor, Chair of Governors or anyone else – or to the LA, 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 (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint and that the complaint has exhausted our official process. The LA will support us in this position, and especially where the complainant's action is causing distress to staff and/or pupils.
- In exceptional circumstances, closure may occur before a complaint has reached Stage Two of the procedures described in this document. This is because a complaints panel takes considerable time and effort to set up and we must be sure that it is likely to assist the process of investigating the complaint.
The Chair of Governors may decide, therefore, that every reasonable action has been undertaken to resolve the complaint and that a review panel would not help to move things forward.

Where you have been through the school's internal complaints procedures (with or without recourse to a complaints review panel) and are still unhappy with the outcome or decision from the governing body, you can contact the Secretary of State for Education via the DfE website www.education.gov.uk , by telephoning 0370 000 2288 or by writing to the address below:

The Schools Complaints Unit (SCU)
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Please enclose with your letter to the DfE a copy of the complaints outcome. This will save time in that the DfE will not need to ask for our view of what has happened.

We would advise parents that, unless the school is shown to have behaved unreasonably or not to have followed their own procedures, there is likely to be little further action that can be taken, as governing bodies are empowered to deal with many issues without reference to either the local authority or the Secretary of State.