

# St. Francis' Catholic Primary School



## Complaints Policy September 2016

Approved by staff:

September 2016

Approved by Governors:

September 2016

Review date:

September 2018

## Mission Statement

Peace

Love

Knowledge

*"We follow Jesus and St Francis praying that we are instruments of peace, learning to love and be loved, embracing our differences and striving for excellence in all we do."*

We value warm relationships with parents and enjoy working with you to enable your child to reach their full potential. We want your child to be happy and safe at St. Francis'. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in school. Be assured that, no matter what you want to tell us, our support and respect for your child will not be affected in any way.

Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. It is difficult for us to investigate an incident or problem properly if it took place some time ago. We do appreciate the assistance we receive from parents in addressing any problems that arise.

We receive very few complaints however we recognise that sometimes things may not go as we would all wish and you may feel that we have fallen short of our high standards; be dissatisfied or require clarification of school matters.

Most issues can be solved quickly and easily, when and if, they arise and we ask you to follow the three steps detailed below.

### **Stage 1 - Talk to the Teacher**

The first thing to do is to talk to the teacher involved. You will need to make an appointment at the School Office to do this, especially if the complaint is complicated or likely to take a while to resolve. Please do not try to see the teacher during the school day as they will be teaching at this time.

### **Stage 2 - Meet the Headteacher**

This should only happen if Step 1 has been completed or if the issue is particularly serious or urgent. The School Office will arrange for you to see the Headteacher or another senior member of staff (the Deputy Head, the Assistant Head, the Key Stage 1, the Key Stage 2 or Foundation Stage Co-ordinator as appropriate to your child). Afterwards the school will write to you saying what it has decided. We hope that the decision will satisfy you, but if not you can go to Step 3.

### **Stage 3 - Chair of Governors**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response from the Head Teacher at Stage 2 they should be advised to put their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors for consideration at Stage 3 of the procedure.

The complainant must ensure that they include details of why they are still dissatisfied with the decision, the recommendations and actions of the Stage 2 complaint and what they require to resolve the matter. They may also attach any evidence to support their concerns that can be additional to that submitted at Stages 1 and 2.

The Chair of Governors must write to the complainant within 5 days of receipt of the complaint to acknowledge this. The letter should state that another letter will follow within 20 school days setting out the actions taken to investigate the complaint and the findings.

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**The complaint is heard by the Chair of Governors (this will be delegated to the vice-chair or other**

### **nominated governor if appropriate).**

The Chair of Governors will look at all the information pertaining to the complaint submitted by the complainant and the investigatory evidence by the school at Stages 1 and 2. The Chair may want to talk with the complainant or investigating staff members to establish facts and obtain further information.

Once satisfied that the investigation has been concluded and a decision has been reached on the complaint, the Chair of Governors will notify the complainant in writing of the conclusion.

The conclusion could be:

- The evidence indicates that the complaint was substantiated and therefore upheld
- The complaint was substantiated in part and what action will be taken
- The complaint is not substantiated by the evidence and therefore not upheld

### **Stage 4 - Governing Body Panel**

The complaint is heard by the Governing Body. This is the final stage of the process.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response from the Chair of Governors (or Vice-Chair) at Stage 3 they should be advised that the next stage is to put their complaint in writing to the School Governing Body at Stage 4.

The complainant must ensure that they include details of why they are still dissatisfied with the decision of the Chair, recommendations and actions of the Stage 3 complaint and what they feel would resolve the matter. They can also attach any evidence to support their concerns in addition to that submitted at Stages 1, 2 and 3.

The complaint will be acknowledged within 10 school days.

The complaint is considered by a panel of Governors who form a complaints appeal panel. The panel must be independent and impartial. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. The panel must have a cross-section of categories of governors and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation. If appropriate the panel can be made up of governors from another school.

The panel must convene a meeting to discuss the complaint and all the investigation evidence to make a final decision on how to progress. A clerk should be appointed to take notes of the meeting and records must be kept.

The panel can decide:

- To convene a meeting with the complainant. If a meeting is to be convened, the person chairing the meeting either the Chair or Vice-chair (whomever did not deal with the complaint at Stage 3), will write to the complainant to acknowledge the complaint within 10 school days. The letter would also include the date, time and venue of the convened meeting to hear the complaint.
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- For non-complex complaints, not to meet with the complainant, but to use all the information available to them and make a decision on the complaint as there is enough information to allow for a decision to be made.

Possible outcomes for the Panel

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Recommend changes to school systems or procedures to ensure that similar do not occur

An outcome letter will be sent to the complainant within 20 school days of the meeting.

**Further information**

The outcome letter from the School Complaints Panel exhausts the 4 Stage procedures. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the process, they are able to contact

Department for Education,

The School Complaints Unit (SCU)

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Piccadilly Gate

Manchester, M1 2WD

The SCU will examine if the school complaints policy and any other relevant processes were followed. The SCU will also examine policies to determine if they adhere to education legislation. However, the SCU will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint and will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint only in exceptional circumstances where it is clear that a school has acted unreasonably or unlawfully.

### Stage 3 Formal Concern Form

Name:	
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Address:	
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Telephone:	
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<p>What concern do you wish to raise?</p>
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Have you spoken to the Class Teacher?	YES	NO
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When did you do this?	Date:
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<p>What happened when you spoke to the Class Teacher?</p>
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Have you spoken to the Headteacher?	YES	NO
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When did you do this?	Date:
What happened when you spoke to the Headteacher?	

What would you like us to do to put things right?
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Signed	
Date	

Please return this form to the Chair of Governors, c/o St Francis' Catholic Primary School

## Model Letter – Complaint not heard

Dear ,

Following receipt of your communications and careful consideration of the same, I regret that I am unable to deal with this matter under the Governing Body's Complaints Procedure as. The reason for this is that:

- You have not identified any specific actions of which you might complain
- Your concerns are presented as conclusions rather than specific actions of which complain.
- The concerns that you identify relate to historical actions and any evidence which might have enabled an objective investigation of your complaint is no longer available.
- The substance of your complaint has been addressed under this procedure already.
- The concerns that you raise do not fall within the scope of this procedure.
- You have not identified any potential sources of evidence which might allow the matter to be investigated.
- The school offered to resolve the matter informally and in my judgement you refused unreasonably to take advantage of this.

If you wish my decision to be reviewed then you may take advantage of (Stage 3 / Stage 4) of the procedure by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body, care of the school.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher  
or Chair of Governing Body

### Model letter - Decision notification

Dear ,

Following receipt of your complaint and careful consideration of all the available relevant evidence, I have concluded that:

- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld. If you are able to provide additional evidence forthwith I/we will reconsider this decision.

OR

- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence in that .....

OR

- The concern was substantiated in part/in full, as ..... The school will review its practices/procedures..... with the intention of avoiding any reoccurrence. Parents will be informed in due course of any policy changes.

OR

- In order to address fully the matters investigated, the school has initiated appropriate internal procedures. Due to the nature of these procedures, their outcome must remain strictly confidential. We are confident, however, that the circumstances that gave rise to your complaint should not recur.

I hope that we may now put this matter behind us and work together for the benefit of your child's progress.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher / Chair of Governors/

c.c. Head Teacher



**Model letter – Review outcome**

Dear ,

Having carefully considered your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the *Governing Body Complaints Committee* has concluded that the *Complaints Procedure* was followed appropriately in respect of your complaint in that .....

Therefore, the matter is now closed as far as the school is concerned.

Or

Having carefully considered your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the *Governing Body Complaints Committee* has concluded that the *Head Teacher* followed the *Complaints Procedure* except .....

Therefore, the following action will be taken .....

Once this action has been completed the school will consider the matter to be closed.

Or

Having carefully considered your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the *Governing Body Complaints Committee* has concluded that the *Head Teacher* followed the *General Complaints Procedure* except that .....

We have determined that this procedural failure did not affect the outcome of the consideration of your complaint so, while we regret this error, we will now consider this matter to be closed as far as the school is concerned.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of Complaints Committee

c.c. Head Teacher

### Checklist for a panel hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is 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 head teacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The head teacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the head teacher 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 head teacher is then invited to sum up the school's action 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 a set time scale.

The process set out above is based on the Head Teacher and complainant being present at the same time. There are occasions where this is not the appropriate arrangement in order to ensure a fair and full consideration of the case. In such cases it is likely that the complaint will be seen first and the Head Teacher at a later stage. At the separate meeting with the complainant, the principles set out above should be followed.