



St Mary's Catholic
Primary School

Complaints Policy
January 2018

Legal Requirements

Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 require that:

- 1) The governing body of a maintained school in England will
 - a) Establish procedures for dealing with complaints relating to the school or to the provision of facilities or services under section 27, other than complaints failing to be dealt with in accordance with any procedures required to be established in relation to the school by virtue of a statutory provision other than this section, and
 - b) Publicise the procedures so established.
- 2) In establishing or publicising procedures under subsection (1), the governing body will have regard to any guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State.

Note: This policy statement relates to complaints about the provision, facilities and services that the school provides, with the exceptions detailed in Appendix A

Policy Aims

- To encourage resolution of issues by informal means wherever possible.
- Easily accessible and publicised.
- Simple to understand and use.
- Impartial
- Non-adversarial
- Allow swift handling with established time limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress.
- Ensure a fair and full investigation by an independent person, when necessary.
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality.
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.
- Provide information to the school's senior management team so the school can endeavour to improve services.

Introduction

Actions before making a complaint

Issues raised by parents, the community or pupils, are often concerns rather than complaints. St. Mary's Catholic Primary School is committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, without needing formal procedures and to keep formal complaints to a minimum. This will not undermine efforts made by the school to handle concerns and staff will give due care and attention to concerns, endeavouring to resolve them as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Depending on the nature of an issue, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure. For the school to be able to investigate a complaint, it should be made within 6 months of the incident. Complaints made after this time may not be investigated. Our aim is to resolve complaints as fairly and speedily as possible.

Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the school.

What is a concern?

The school considers a concern to be an expression of hopeful resolution to an issue you regard to be a problem. In most cases concerns will be dealt with by the class teacher or the individual delivering the service, by informal means whenever possible. Concerns will be considered as informal complaints under stage 1 of the complaints policy, (See page 3, below)

How to raise a concern

You may raise an informal concern under stage 1 of the complaints policy via the normal informal discussion that takes place between parent / carers, staff and the Headteacher about problems and concerns as they arise. Most issues could and should be resolved through this dialogue. These concerns might include such matters as your child's work or progress, relations with staff or with other pupils, including bullying, or your child's personal welfare.

The first point of contact regarding concerns will normally be the class teacher. Appointments to meet with the class teacher are available after school and may be made directly with the teacher concerned or via the school office.

When meeting with the teacher to raise your concerns, please be patient, as the teacher may need to perform an investigation or put corrective measures in place and then determine their effectiveness. This informal stage may require several discussions to reach a conclusion satisfactory to all parties. Desired actions for the school and parent / carer, timescales and the need for further meetings, if necessary should be discussed.

If you feel that a concern has not been resolved through discussions with the teacher, or that it is of a sufficiently serious nature, then an appointment to discuss it formally with the Headteacher should be made. You should indicate that the appointment is regarding a complaint.

What is a complaint?

The school considers a complaint to be an expression of grievance or dissatisfaction, requiring redress received from or on behalf of a parent / carer or member of the public regarding:

- Action taken on or behalf of the school.
- Failure by the school or its staff or contractors to respond to a reported problem.
- The standard of service(s) provided or discrimination in their delivery.
- The policies of the school.

How to make a complaint and how complaints will be dealt with

It is hoped the majority of complaints can be resolved informally by raising verbally, in person or on the telephone, or by putting in writing, given or sent to the school. They can be discussed there and then, or at a mutually agreed time and a satisfactory explanation given or resolution speedily implemented (see stage 1 below). Complaints that cannot be resolved informally will be escalated and dealt with as follows:

There are four stages to the complaints procedure as outlined below. If at any stage of the complaints process the school is unable to comply with any of the timescales prescribed within each stage, the school will inform the complainant in writing of any mitigating circumstances that may have caused the delay.

Stage 1 (informal): Complaint heard by staff member.

This may be brought to the school's attention via the day to day business of the school either in person, verbally or in writing. The school's telephone number is 01952 388255. The staff member hearing the complaint will inform the Headteacher of the outcome. If the issue is not resolved, escalate to stage 2.

Stage 2: (formal): Complaint heard by Headteacher.

The Headteacher may delegate the task of collating information to another member of staff (not the member of staff who heard the complaint at stage 1)

1. A complaint will be submitted to the Headteacher, see Appendix B.
2. The Headteacher will acknowledge the receipt of the complaint within 5 school days.
3. The head teacher will write to the complainant with the outcome of the investigation within 20 school days.
4. The Headteacher will offer escalation to stage 3 if the complainant is still dissatisfied.

Stage3 (formal): Complaint heard by chair of governors.

1. A complaint form will be submitted to the chair of governors, see Appendix B.
2. The chair of governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 school days.
3. The chair of governors will write to the complainant with the outcome of the investigation within 20 school days.
4. The chair of governors will inform the Headteacher of the income.
5. The chair of governors will offer escalation to stage 4 if the complainant is still dissatisfied.

Stage 4 (formal): Governor's complaints panel.

1. A letter will be written to the chair of governors requesting the complaint be considered further.
2. A letter will be issued inviting the complainant to a meeting within 20 school days of the complainant's letter.
3. A letter will be issued to the complainant confirming the panel's decision within 5 school days of the panel meeting. They will inform them of their option for an appeal hearing which must be lodged within 10 school days of the panel's response letter.
4. The panel will inform the Headteacher of the outcome.
5. Following an appeal hearing, the panel will advise the complainant of the escalation route to the Secretary for Education.

Complaints about the Headteacher

Complaints about the Headteacher, that the complainant cannot or does not wish to raise directly with the headteacher, will in the first instance be sent in writing to the Chair of Governors, who will arrange for the matter to be dealt with. See Appendix B for a complaints form.

Investigating Complaints

At each stage of the complaints procedure, the person investigating the complaint will make sure they:-

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved.
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
- Meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary).
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied, if they wish.
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Keep notes of the interview or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage of the procedure the school will keep in mind ways in which a complaint could be resolved. Where it may be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part, the school may do so. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology
- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- An assurance that the event will not recur.
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again.
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Vexatious Complaints

See Vexatious or Persistent Complaints Policy

Monitoring Complaints

An anonymous analysis of all formal complaints will regularly be reported to the governing body. Should there be any necessary changes to school policies, procedures or practices, required, these may be considered.

This policy could be used in conjunction with:

St Mary's Vexatious and Persistent Complaints Policy
St Mary's Parental/Carer Licence Policy

Appendix A - Complaints not in the scope of the procedure

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to school • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEND) • School reorganisation proposals • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation. 	The School Governing Body of St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Exclusion of children from school.	Further information about rising concerns about exclusion can be found at www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions
Whistleblowing	School have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised with OFSTED by telephone on 0300 123 3155, via email at: Whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to WBHL, OFSTED, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.
Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures	These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.
Complaints about services	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted direct.

Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School Complaints Form (Appendix B)
Sheet one

Your Name:
Pupil's Name (if applicable):
Your relationship to pupil (if applicable):
Address:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint:
What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was their response?)

Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School Complaints Form (Appendix B)
Sheet two

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

School Use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date: