

St Edward's Catholic Junior School

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".

Philippians 4: 13



Complaints Procedure Policy

Introduction

At St Edward's School together with Breakfast and Afterschool Club we recognise that Christ is in each individual and as such we have a concern for every member of the community. Our system of sanctions and rewards reflects justice and forgiveness emanating from commitment to Christ and his teaching.

Our governing body has adopted this procedure to deal with concerns or complaints from members of the school community or general public.

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing by email or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Aims and Objectives

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

Careful consideration will be given to all concerns and complaints and we will deal with them as swiftly as possible. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed.

In all cases we will put the interests of the child above all other

issues. Our procedure is underpinned by the following framework

of principles:

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- Be easily accessible and publicised.
- Be simple to use and understand.
- Be impartial.
- Be non-adversarial.

- Allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible (some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation).
- Address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.
- Provide information to the school's senior management team and Governors.

Areas not covered by this procedure

This procedure does not apply to issues concerning the curriculum, collective worship, admissions, and exclusion appeals, decisions about your child's special educational needs or grievances by school staff. These are the subject of separate complaints procedures. Copies of these procedures can be obtained from the school or via the school website

<http://stedwards.greenschoolsonline.co.uk/>

In addition, Ofsted has the power to investigate certain (qualifying) complaints about maintained schools, including those from parents. A qualifying complaint is one that affects the whole school, not an individual. More information can be obtained from the school or Ofsted.

All other complaints are handled by the school according to the arrangements set out below.

Timescales

A concern or complaint must be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The school will consider complaints made out of this time frame in exceptional circumstances.

Concerns or complaints raised outside of term time will be considered to have been raised on the first school day after the holiday period.

Stage 1 – initial concerns

If you have any concerns about the school, or the education we are providing at any time, please discuss the matter with your child's class teacher at the earliest opportunity.

Please do not publicise any concerns you have on social networking sites.

The school considers any concerns very seriously and most problems can be resolved following discussion and a shared understanding of the issues. All members of staff work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school and is making good progress and they always want to know if there is a problem so they can help to resolve it.

Most concerns can be resolved at this level, however, if after speaking to your child's class teacher, you are still concerned, please discuss the matter with the Deputy Head Teacher or Head Teacher. In some circumstances, governors may be involved in informal discussion if appropriate.

Stage 2 – formal procedure

Most concerns are resolved at Stage 1, however if you remain dissatisfied and wish to take the matter further you will be asked to complete a complaint form (Appendix 1) or put your concerns in writing for further investigation.

Complaint process

The aim of this process is to ensure each party has a clear and common understanding of the complaint and should include information on what actions might resolve the problem at this stage.

The form (Appendix 1) or written concern should be returned to the Head Teacher, unless the complaint concerns the Head Teacher in which case it should be returned to the Chair of Governors through the school office, marking the envelope 'FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION' or alternatively by email to office@stedwards.bucks.sch.uk or

chairofgovernors@stedwards.bucks.sch.uk

If the complaint is about the Chair of the Board, an individual governor or the whole Governing Board, it should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Board at the school address (marked Private and Confidential)

If using e mail please use also use the form in appendix 1 and attach to your e mail. If this is not possible, please try to follow the headings on appendix one, when writing your e mail.

You will receive an acknowledgement on receipt of your complaint form or letter within 5 school working days.

Investigation

An investigation will be carried out into the complaint and the way it has been handled by the school. This will include a review of any relevant documentation and information and seeking the views of relevant people, where necessary. The person undertaking the investigation will normally write to you with the outcome of this process within 15 school working days of receiving the complaint. If they are unable to meet this deadline, they will provide you with an update and revised response date.

If, at any time, it becomes apparent that the complaint is a disciplinary or capability issue, the matter will be dealt with by following the appropriate procedure rather than the complaints procedure. You will be notified if this is the case with your complaint; however, you are not entitled to know which procedure, or the final outcome, because of the right to confidentiality of the member of staff involved.

If the investigation is to be carried out by the Headteacher, they may delegate this to another member of the school's senior leadership team. If the complaint is about the Headteacher or a member of the Governing Board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair) a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete the investigation.

If the complaint is about the Chair / Vice-Chair of Governors jointly, the whole Governing Board or the majority of the Governing Board, the investigation will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Governing Board (or Diocese if appropriate).

If, following the outcome of the investigation, you feel your concern has not been resolved, you may choose to refer your complaint to Stage 3 of the procedure. This must be done in writing to the school within 15 working days of the completion of Stage 2. Requests received out of this time frame will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Stage 3

At this stage the complaint will be considered by a panel of 3 governors. The panel will consist of governors who have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, or connection with the complainant (this may include a governor from another school if there are not enough governors available to sit on the panel). The governor panel will consist of either foundation, local authority or parent governors of the school. Staff governors will not sit on this panel.

The panel will meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision about it on behalf of the governing body. A clerk to the Governing Body or an independent clerk appointed by the panel will be present to take minutes in the interests of all parties. The meeting will normally take place within 15 working days of your request.

You will have the opportunity to submit written evidence on the complaint prior to the meeting of the panel. There should not be any new evidence submitted at this time. You will have the opportunity to attend, accompanied by a friend/partner if you wish, to present your case. The Head Teacher will be given the same opportunities. Appendix 2 outlines the process that will be followed at a panel hearing.

The panel will normally invite all parties to the meeting but may also decide to conduct the meeting through written representations. In making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs. When submitting your complaint please indicate if you wish the panel to consider this complaint in your absence or if you wish to attend in person

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee panel will not normally accept as evidence recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded

If you are invited to attend the meeting, you will be contacted through your preferred method of communication either by phone email or post by the clerk to the governing board school to inform you of the date, time and venue of the meeting. All letters will be sent via registered post. Any further written material to be submitted to the panel will also be requested. You should confirm your acceptance to attend the panel hearing on the date specified to the clerk within 10 working days of receipt of the communication. If the date is not convenient, you will be offered a second date and you should confirm your acceptance of this date within 10 working days. If you reject the offer of two proposed meeting dates, without good reason, the school will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in your absence on the basis of written submissions from all parties.

If you attend the meeting, you may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage any party to bring legal representative to the panel hearing. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and / or legal representation.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or

- The entire Governing Board or
- The majority of the Governing Board

The complaint will be heard by a panel of independent governors co-opted for this purpose.

Outcome of the Panel Hearing

The panel will write to you with its conclusion within 5 school working days of the meeting, and its decision is final.

The panel can:

- Uphold your complaint in whole or in part
- Dismiss your complaint in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the panel will:

- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

An explanation of the panel's decision and any actions or recommendations will be detailed in the letter to you communicating the outcome of the complaints panel.

If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to put your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education, who can review whether the school has acted reasonably and followed the correct procedures. The address is Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1 3BT.

Note: If, for any reason, the adopted procedure cannot be followed, the governing body, in consultation with the Local Authority/Diocese, will put in place an alternative fair process.

Unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonable complainant behaviour

Unfortunately, in a minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way which can either impede the investigation of their complaint or can have significant resource issues for the school.

These actions can occur either while the complaint is being investigated, or once the school has concluded the complaint investigation.

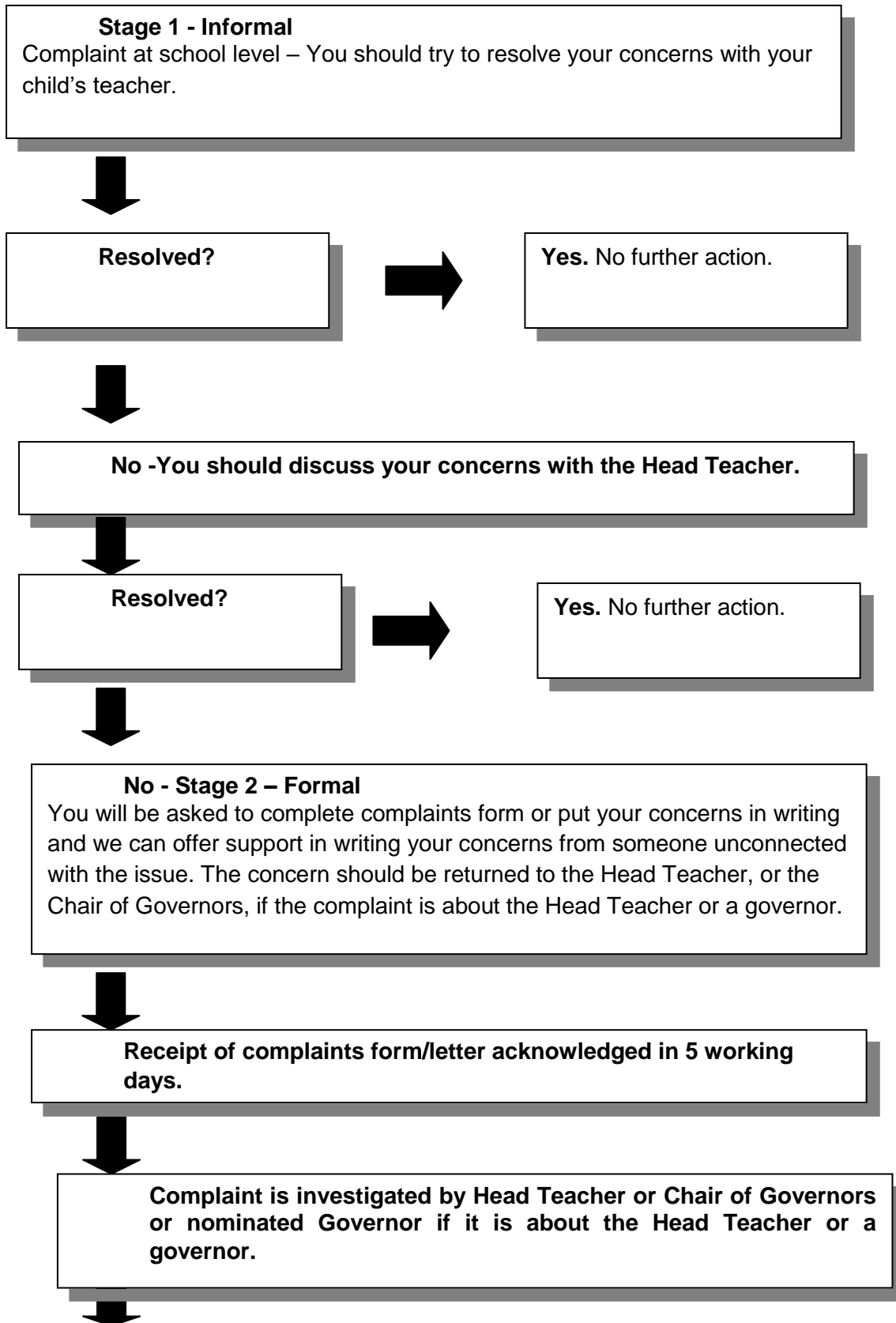
In such cases, the school will observe the Local Government Ombudsman's Guidance Note on 'unreasonably persistent complainants' and 'unreasonable complainant behavior.'

Monitoring and Review

The governing body monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Head Teacher logs all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

Flowchart Summary*

* Please refer to the procedure for more detailed information.





You will be informed of the outcome of the investigation within 15 working days of receiving the complaint.



Resolved?



Yes. No further action.



No - If you wish to take your complaint to Stage 3 of the procedure you will be asked to confirm this in writing within 15 work days of the completion of Stage 2.



Governor Complaints Panel meets to consider your complaint with 15 working days. You will be asked to submit written evidence in advance and attend the panel meeting to explain the nature of your complaint.



Panel will make a final decision on behalf of the Governing Body and writes to you within 5 working days.



Resolved?



Yes. No further action.



No - You can write to the Secretary of State of Education if you feel the school has acted unreasonably or has not followed the correct procedures.

Appendix 1 - Complaint Form

Please complete and return to The School Office or Chair of Governors who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone

number: Evening

telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint, including dates, names of witnesses etc, to allow the matter to be fully investigated.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak/write to and what was the response)?

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

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

Signature:

Date:

OFFICIAL USE

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

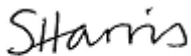
Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix 2 - At the panel hearing

- After introductions, the complainant will be invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses (if any).
- The Head Teacher/Chair of Governors may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Head Teacher/Chair of Governors is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses (if any).
- The complainant may question both the Head Teacher/Chair of Governors 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/Chair of Governors is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- The Chair of the panel explains that both parties will hear from the panel within five working days.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.

Name and signature of Head Teacher: Mrs Suzette Harris



Name and signature of Chair of Governors: Mrs Maria Harty



Date: February 2021

Review date: February 2022

REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed annually.