

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

March 2016

Complaints Procedure

If you have any concerns about your child's education, whether it relates to the curriculum or other matters, please make an appointment to see your child's class teacher. If you are still concerned then please make an appointment to discuss this with the Headteacher.

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been settled by informal discussion, you can ask to have it considered by the Headteacher.

Complaints may be made under arrangements pursuant to Section 23 of the Education Reform Act 1988. details are available from the school office or the education office.

We would very much hope that any problem could be resolved through discussion with the staff at school. The following information is given in accordance with the 1988 Education Reform Act. The minutes of governors' meetings, National Curriculum documents and school curriculum guidelines may be viewed by appointment in school.

Policy

In any organisation it is inevitable that there will be concerns and complaints from time to time. Their effect tends to be disheartening but it is important that we react to complaints in a positive manner and deal with them properly. If this is not the case, the problem often becomes more extreme and a negative cycle of events is set in motion.

We emphasise the school's commitment to the education and well-being of all the children here. We welcome the interest and co-operation of parents and, to achieve a happy working atmosphere, parents and staff need to work well together.

If you are concerned or worried, please contact us as soon as possible so that we can discuss the matter and resolve the problem.

Introduction for Parents and Staff

A positive approach

By adopting a positive approach, there can often be positive outcomes - prevention of further difficulties; increased mutual respect and greater understanding between parent and school; reduction of conflict and tension. It can also provide information to influence the school's efficiency and identify problems or deficiencies that have been overlooked.

Concerns

Many parental concerns will be routinely dealt with through contact with the school office or the class teacher. These are not formal complaints but need resolving effectively to ensure that all are working together effectively for the child. These could include:

- Lost items such as PE kit
- Queries about the amount of homework

Complaints

However, there will be other occasions when the degree of dissatisfaction amounts to a complaint - about a decision that has been made, an action taken or the way in which a child or parent were treated. These could include:

- Educational issues - lack of progress in school or work provided
- Discipline issues – unresolved problems between children or sanctions taken
- Disagreements over policy

Statutory Complaints

Some complaints have to follow a statutory or formalised process and official procedures exist for dealing with complaints about:

- the national curriculum and Religious Education
- child protection issues
- admissions and exclusions
- financial regulations.

There are also procedures concerning personnel and legal matters.

Non-statutory complaints

The school has agreed a procedure for dealing with areas other than those above with non-statutory complaints (see Appendix below).

Appendix

Procedure for Dealing with non-Statutory Complaints

Stage 1 - Informal Action

Any early concerns can be written in a child's reading book and parents can leave notes or messages at the main office to be given to the appropriate person. They will either receive a reply in the reading book, be sent a return message or telephoned.

Parents who are concerned or worried about their child or incidents in which the child is involved should first of all talk to the class teacher, who will usually be able to offer reassurance or look into the problem. (Concerns about administration matters will be dealt with by the Office Manager.)

A class teacher trying to settle a class of thirty excitable children at the beginning of the school day, is not able to provide the undivided attention that s/he would wish to give to a concerned parent. If an appointment is made and staff have an idea of the problem, then other staff can be consulted if appropriate or more information can be available for the interview.

If the parent is unable to speak to the class teacher at the time, a note will be made, including the complainant's name, phone number and date and the nature of the concern. The parent is contacted as soon as the matter has been investigated. The teacher may also consult the Headteacher at this stage.

The Family Learning Mentor is also available to talk to parents in greater depth about concerns. She can be asked to investigate a concern on a parent's behalf, including observing a child in the class or on the playground.

If no satisfactory solution has been found, parents are asked if they wish their concern to be considered further.

Stage 2 - Referral to the Headteacher

Usually Class teachers, the Office Manager, Deputy Head or Family Learning Mentor will be able to resolve any problems - perhaps arranging to keep in regular contact with parents, to

involve other staff or agencies or to discipline children. Sometimes the teacher will refer parents to the Headteacher if the problem is serious or there are complex issues.

If parents are dissatisfied after the initial contact then an approach should be made to the Headteacher or the Deputy Headteacher.

They will acknowledge the complaint either in writing or verbally within three days.

The Headteacher will investigate further, interviewing those involved as appropriate. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil would normally be interviewed with a parent present or, if this is not possible, with a member of staff who is not directly involved.

The Headteacher will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.

Once all relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher may arrange a meeting to respond to the concern. If the complaint was in writing, a written response may be sent.

If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the Stage 2 procedures are carried out by the Chair of the Governing Body.

Stage 3 – Referral to Chair of Governors

If however parents are still dissatisfied with the decision or the outcome, then they should complain in writing to the Chair of Governors, marked Private and Confidential.

Parents should avoid contacting individual governors as this would make it difficult for them to be involved in meetings of the Governing Body to make judgements on the matter.

All complaints of a serious nature will be recorded and acknowledged within seven days.

In the case of more serious matters, time may be needed to investigate the concern properly and to determine the most suitable course of action.

In these circumstances an acknowledgment will be sent to parents to explain what is happening and when they can expect a full reply.

Stage 4 - Review by the Governing Body

The Chair will acknowledge receipt of the written complaint, informing the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by a Committee of three members of the School's Governing Body within 20 working days.

The Chair may arrange to convene a Complaints Panel elected from members of the Governing Body. The members should have no prior involvement with the complaint and they should elect a Chair for the committee. All relevant documentation regarding the complaint should be given to the members of the committee as soon as possible.

The Chair of the Committee will write and inform all concerned of the date, time and place of the meeting at least 5 working days in advance. The notification to the complainant should also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend and the right to submit further written evidence.

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Committee to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.

After the meeting, the Committee will consider the evidence and a written decision will be sent to the Headteacher and the complainant within 15 working days.

Stage 5 – Referral beyond the Governing Body

If a complainant is still unsatisfied with the outcome the matter can be referred to the Local Education Officer.

The Headteacher or Governing Body can also refer a Parent's complaints to the Ombudsman if it feels the complaint cannot be resolved or repeated complaints are of a vexatious nature.

Complaints can be taken to the Local Government Ombudsman on the grounds that a Governing Body or Local Authority is acting or proposing to act unreasonably or has failed to discharge its duties under the Act.