



St Bede's

Roman Catholic High School

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

1.1

St Bede's welcomes comments from parents and carers of students in the school. We regard it as an opportunity to improve what we do as well as to resolve any misunderstandings. We aim to always listen and be respectful, confidential, impartial and understanding, whilst upholding the ethos and values of the school.

1.2

Where an issue arises or an incident occurs which a parent considers a matter of concern or complaint, the school will attempt to resolve the matter in accordance with the procedure set out in this document. The procedure is in three parts. Part One is informal and it is hoped that all concerns and complaints can be resolved this way. If this is not possible, Parts Two and Three allow for a formal process to be followed.

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the headteacher and governing body.

1.3

In this policy document, the term "parent" refers to a parent or carer of a student at St Bede's.

What is excluded from this policy

2.1

This policy relates to parental complaints about the operation of the school in general or some aspect of a child's education in particular. It does not apply to:

Child Protection

Collective Worship

Freedom of Information Access

The National Curriculum

Pupil Exclusions

School Admissions

School re-organisation proposals

Serious complaints or allegations relating to the abuse of children, assault, criminal or financial matters.

Services provided by other organisations on the school site or through the school

Sex Education

Special Educational Needs assessment and statementing procedure

How to contact us with a concern/complaint under this policy

3.1

When an issue arises or an incident occurs which a parent considers a matter of concern or complaint, he or she should contact the school by phone, letter or in person. Contact may also be made by email but the school will reply to the email by phone or letter, as appropriate. All letters sent by the school to parents under this policy are sent by standard first-class post.

3.2

If a parent attends reception and seeks to discuss the matter immediately, the school will try to provide an appropriate member of staff within a reasonable time but, given timetable constraints and staff having out-of-school-hours meetings, this may not be possible and it reserves the right to decline a meeting and to ask the parent to either put the matter in writing or to arrange an appointment at school at a future date.

3.3

The school will attempt to resolve the matter informally, as explained in Part A below (whilst providing a right to proceed to a formal resolution under a written complaint procedure). However, if a matter is sufficiently serious to warrant it being dealt with from the start as a formal written complaint a parent will be required to fill out an official complaint form. In such a case the parent's first step should be to access the form that is available on the school website, or phone the school and ask that a form be sent to him or her.

How Concerns/Complaints will be resolved

Part A. Informal Resolution

4.1

Where possible the school will attempt to resolve a concern/complaint informally.

4.2

If the concern/complaint relates to an incident concerning your child or some aspect of his or her education, the appropriate person to deal with the matter is either the teacher in question, your child's house tutor, or his/her head of college.

4.3

If you have a concern/complaint relating to the running of the school, or to school policy, in general - rather than a matter specific to your own child/children - the appropriate person to deal with the matter is headteacher, or one of the deputy/assistant headteachers.

4.4

If your concern/complaint is about the headteacher personally, as opposed to actions/decisions of his concerning the running of the school, the appropriate person to deal with the matter is the chair of governors. A decision/action of the headteacher

made in the normal course of his employment will fall under paragraphs 4.2 or 4.3 above and will not be treated as a complaint against him personally.

4.5

If your concern/complaint is about an individual governor (other than the chair of governors), the appropriate person to deal with the matter is the chair of governors.

4.6

If your concern/complaint is about the chair of governors or the governing body in general, contact should first be made with the clerk to the governors. The clerk will determine whether to herself seek an informal resolution of the matter, in accordance with paragraph 4.7 below. If an informal resolution is not deemed appropriate, or is attempted but not resolved to the satisfaction of the parent, the clerk will refer the complaint to the Director of Education of the Diocese of Salford.

4.7

The appropriate person (i.e. the person referred to in paragraphs 4.2 to 4.5 above, as applicable) will listen to you and investigate as appropriate. Having done so, that person may:

- give an explanation
- amend or reverse a decision made by the school
- admit that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- give an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- give an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- make an apology

4.8

If you remain dissatisfied and wish to proceed with the matter as a formal complaint then you will be asked to complete an official school complaint form in order to proceed under Part B of this procedure.

Part B Complaint formally determined by Headteacher

5.1

In order to initiate Part B, you must complete the school's official written complaint form, available from the school reception desk and from the school website. Please note that if the school receives a communication purporting to be a written complaint - even if headed "formal complaint" or similar words - you will be asked to complete the official written complaint form and for the purposes of this Part B procedure the date of receipt of the form will be the starting date of the written complaint.

5.2

Having received the complaint form, the school will write to the parent within five school days to acknowledge its receipt and to confirm that the matter will be dealt with under Part B (unless the complaint is outside the ambit of the complaints policy by reason of one of the reasons set out in paragraph 5.3 below).

5.3

The reasons why a complaint would be deemed to fall outside this policy are:

- (i) The matter raised is substantially a repeat of previous complaint which has been addressed by the school;
- (ii) The matter relates to events which occurred more than three calendar months before the date when the written complaint was received by the school, unless good reason can be shown as to why the matter could not have been raised earlier.
- (iii) The complaint is vexatious or frivolous.
- (iv) The complaint relates to a matter over which the school has no jurisdiction or authority over the persons involved.
- (v) The complaint relates to one of the excluded matters set out in paragraph 2.1 above.

5.4

A meeting will be arranged between the parent and the headteacher to allow the parent to explain to the headteacher the reasons for the complaint and, if applicable, why he or she is dissatisfied with the school's response under the informal process in Part A. Such meeting should take place within ten school days of the receipt of the written complaint. The headteacher will investigate the circumstances of the complaint and, within five working days of the meeting with the parent, make a written determination in which the complaint will be upheld (in full or in part) or dismissed, with reasons given. The headteacher may delegate the investigation of some or all of the circumstances to a deputy/assistant headteacher but must make the decision on the complaint personally.

5.5

If the complaint is upheld the headteacher may:

- amend or reverse a decision made by the school
- admit that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- give an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- give an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- make an apology

5.6

If the complaint was a complaint against the headteacher personally within paragraph 4.4 above, the chair of governors will carry out the procedure set out in paragraphs 5.4 and 5.5.

5.7

If, on receipt of the written determination, the parent remains dissatisfied, he/she may appeal to a panel of governors under the procedure set out in Part C below. Any decision to appeal must be notified to the school in writing and must be received by the school within ten school days of the date stated on the written determination.

Part C: Panel hearing

6.1

Within five school days of receipt of a valid written appeal, the clerk to the governors will reply to the parent stating the time, date and venue of the panel hearing and the names of the members of the panel.

6.2

The panel shall choose one of the three governors in attendance to act as chair and shall conduct the hearing in accordance with the procedure in Schedule 1 below. The hearing shall be clerked by the clerk to the governors.

6.3

The remit of the panel allows it to:

- i. dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- ii. uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- iii. decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- iv. recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

6.4

The school does not provide any further right of appeal.

Schedule 1

Panel hearing procedure (NB: the term “complainant” refers to the parent appealing).

- 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 headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The headteacher is then invited to explain the school’s actions and be followed by the school’s witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the headteacher 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 headteacher is then invited to sum up the school’s actions and response to the complaint.
- The chair explains that both parties will receive its written decision from the panel within a set time scale. That time scale would normally be ten school days.
- The parties will then withdraw

6.5

Dealing with Serial or Persistent Complainants

If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. The decision to stop responding to a complainant should never be taken lightly and the School needs to be sure that:

- The School has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs;
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the School's position and their options (if any) and
- They are contacting the School repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time.

If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, Chair of Governors, as appropriate, is able to inform them in writing or via email that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

6.6

Record keeping

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision. All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be stored securely and be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. Complaints information shared with the whole governing body will not name individuals so that anonymity can be maintained in case of a panel hearing.

6.7

Referral to the DfE

If the complainant is unsatisfied after following the full complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the DfE. The DfE will not re-investigate the complaint; it will only determine whether or not the school adhered to its own policies, and whether the policy adhered to current legislation and guidance.