

ST. VINCENT de PAUL CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLAINTS - POLICY and PROCEDURE



Rationale:

This policy is intended to set out how the school will deal with general complaints.

Parents should feel able to express their views knowing that they will be dealt with fairly.

This policy does not cover those aspects of school life where the law sets specific complaints procedures i.e. admissions, exclusions, complaints regarding the delivery of the National Curriculum and the provision of Collective Worship and Religious Education.

Aims:

To provide parents with an accessible and easily understood procedure for complaints.

We would encourage parents to express their views at the earliest opportunity and through the appropriate channels.

Parents should be assured that making a complaint would under no circumstances adversely affect their child.

Procedure Stage One - informal complaint

- 1.1 The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved directly through the class teacher, the administration staff, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, depending upon the nature of the complaint.
- 1.2 If the person first contacted cannot deal with the matter immediately, it will be recorded; date, name, contact address or telephone number and the nature of the complaint.
- 1.3 On certain issues the Headteacher may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage.
- 1.4 If the complaint relates to the Headteacher, the parent is advised to contact the Chair of Governors.
- 1.5 Complaints made informally to Governors will be referred to the Headteacher or to the Chair of Governors where appropriate.
- 1.6 The person dealing with the complaint must make clear to the parent what action/monitoring of the situation is taking place, putting this in writing only if this seems the best way of clarifying the issues.
- 1.7 Where no satisfactory solution has been found, the parents will be advised of how they can make a formal complaint.

Stage two - formal complaint to the Headteacher

- 2.1 When a formal complaint is made, it will involve completion of the written Complaints Form and will be acknowledged by the Headteacher (or designate) in writing within 3 working days.
- 2.2 The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaint procedure and a target day for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be within 10 working days: if this proves impossible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.
- 2.3 The Headteacher (or designate) will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet with them to supplement any information provided previously. It will be made clear to the complainant that, if they wish, they may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative or advocate.
- 2.4 If necessary, the Headteacher (or designate) will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres upon a pupil, the pupil would also be interviewed. Pupils will be interviewed with parents/guardians present.
- 2.5 The Headteacher (or designate) will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and any other relevant documentation.
- 2.6 When all relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher (or designate) will then produce a written response to the complainant, or may request to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly.
- 2.7 The written response will include a full explanation of the decisions and the reasons for them. Where appropriate, this will include the action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant will be advised that should they wish to take the complaint further, they should notify the Chair of Governors in writing within 5 weeks of receiving the outcome letter.
- 2.8 If the complaint is against the Headteacher, or if the Headteacher has been very closely involved at Stage 1, the relevant Governing Body sub-committee will carry out the Stage 2 procedures.

Stage 3 - formal complaint to the Governing Body

- 3.1 The Clerk to the Governing Body will write to the complainant, acknowledging receipt of the written request. The acknowledgement will inform the complainant that the complaint will be heard by 3 members of the Governing Body within 28 working days of receipt of the complaint. The letter will also explain the right of the complainant to submit any further relevant documentation. These must be received in time for reading and study by the members.
- 3.2 The Clerk to the Governing Body will arrange to convene a meeting of the relevant sub-committee.
- 3.3 The Clerk to the Governing Body will ensure that the sub-committee hears the complaint within 20 working days of receiving the letter in 3.1. All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint will be given to members. If the correspondence is excessive, the Clerk may prepare a thorough summary to send to sub-committee members.
- 3.4 The Clerk to the Governing Body will write and inform the complainant, Headteacher, relevant witnesses and members of the sub-committee at least 5 working days in advance of the date, time and venue of the meeting. The notification to the complainant will also inform them of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/advocate/interpreter. This letter will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further evidence to the sub-committee.
- 3.5 If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that all parties have time to consider and respond to the new information.
- 3.6 The meeting will allow for:
 - the complainant to explain their issues and the Headteacher to explain the school's response
 - the Headteacher to question the complainant about the complaint and the complainant the Headteacher about the school's response
 - sub-committee members to have the opportunity to question both the complainant and the Headteacher
 - any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair) and all parties having the right to question all witnesses
 - final statements by both the complainant and the Headteacher

- 3.7 The Chair of the sub-committee will explain to the complainant and the Headteacher that, after consideration, a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days.
- 3.8 The sub-committee will then consider all the evidence presented and:
- reach a unanimous, or at least majority decision and
 - decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint and
 - if appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures
- 3.9 A written statement outlining the decision of the sub-committee will be sent to the complainant and Headteacher. The letter to the complainant will explain whether a further appeal can be made and, if so, to whom.

This policy applies to all staff, parents and Governors.

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary