



St Joseph's

Roman Catholic High School
& Sports College

Complaints Policy

Our school is a community where Jesus Christ is our role model and his message the guiding principle behind all we do.

Every member of our community is responsible for creating an environment that is caring, fair and respectful of each individual.

We develop our potential, celebrate our talents and go forward together in faith.

Approved by Governors: December 2015

Date for Review: December 2016

Signed Chair of Governors: P. Jones

Signed Headteacher: R Woods

Governors Committee: Finance Premises & Staffing

1. Purpose of the Complaints Procedure

The procedure aims to reassure parents and others with an interest in the school that:

- any complaint against the school will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution.
- the school recognises that a willingness to listen to questions and criticism and to respond positively, can lead to improvements in school practices and provision for pupils.

2. Scope of the Procedure

- 2.1 A complaint is defined as a clear statement of dissatisfaction about specified aspect of the school's work.
- 2.2 This procedure deals with specified day-to-day complaints against the management and/or operation of the school which fall outside the scope of the following procedures:
 - Complaints which have an alternative statutory avenue of appeal or complaint, i.e. admissions, exclusions, SEN assessments, Section 409 Curriculum Complaints and those covered by the Education (School Records) Regulations 1989.
 - Serious complaints which must be dealt with by specific employment procedures e.g. allegations of professional abuse, criminal offences or those that are potentially staff disciplinary issues.
- 2.3 Complainants may be anyone e.g. parents, guardians, grandparents, neighbours of the school or anyone with an interest in the work of the school. However, it is expected that it will be mainly parents or guardians who will make use of this procedure. The term 'parent' is therefore used throughout the procedure as a generic term but the procedure also applies in relation to any other type of complaint.
- 2.4 Complaints may be made by telephone, e-mail, in person or be written.

3. General

- 3.1 The school and/or parents may request advice or guidance from Bolton Council's Children and Young People's Services department at any stage in the procedure.
- 3.2 Records of all conversations and meetings with parents to resolve complaints will be kept. At a Governors' Complaints Panel meeting, minutes will be taken. To help prevent recurring complaints, copies of correspondence and notes will be kept on file in the school's records, separately from individual pupil records.
- 3.3 If at any stage in the procedure it becomes apparent that the complaint falls outside of this general complaints procedure, parents will be informed.
- 3.4 There may be rare occasions when, despite all the stages of the procedure having been followed, a parent remains dissatisfied. If the parent seeks to re-open the same issue, the school reserves the right to inform him/her in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed.

4. Stage 1 : Informal Stage

- 4.1 On occasions, a parent may raise a concern directly with school staff without any formality. There is a difference between a parent raising a concern, and a formal complaint. The school aims to resolve all such concerns in a speedy and effective way, without the need for formal procedures.
- 4.2 However, if the concern is not resolved immediately and a complaint is confirmed by the parent, the opportunity to discuss the matter with an appropriate member of staff will be given e.g. Headteacher, Deputy or Assistant Head, Head of Department, or a Member of the Pastoral Team. In the case of complaint against the Headteacher, this stage will always be heard directly by the Headteacher her/himself.
- 4.3 The member of staff will discuss the issue with the parent and those involved in school, with the aim of resolving the complaint as soon as possible. The parent will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and what action, if any, the school proposes to take.
- 4.4 If the informal process has been exhausted and no satisfactory solution has been found, the parent will be asked by the member of staff dealing with the complaint whether (s)he wishes the complaint to be considered formally at stage two of this procedure.
- 4.5 If wishing to proceed with the complaint, the parent will be invited to put the complaint in writing to the Headteacher.

5. Stage 2 : Referral to the Chair of Governors or Headteacher for further investigation.

- 5.1 Where the complaint has been addressed by the Headteacher at stage one, this stage will be heard by the Chair of Governors. Where another staff member has addressed the complaint at stage one, this stage will be heard by the Headteacher.
- 5.2 The Chair of Governors or Headteacher will acknowledge the written complaint within **five school days** of receipt and provide an opportunity to meet the parent to discuss the complaint.
- 5.3 The Chair of Governors or Headteacher will investigate the complaint and a written response will normally be made within **ten school days** of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date.
- 5.4 The written response will include full reasons for the conclusions reached by the Chair of Governors or Headteacher and what action, if any, the school proposed to take to resolve the matter.
- 5.5 If the parent still remains dissatisfied, (s)he will be advised that in order to progress the complaint further at Stage 3, (s)he must notify the Clerk to the Governing Body in writing **within ten school days of the letter in para 5.4 being received**, copying the original complaint letter.
- 5.6 The Clerk will then ensure that the parent is offered the opportunity of taking the complaint to the Governors' Complaints Panel at Stage 3 of this Procedure.

6. Stage 3 : Review by the Governors' Complaints Panel

- 6.1 Complaints only rarely reach this level. However, when the need arises, the Governors' Complaints Panel (established according to the suggested composition detailed in Appendix 1 attached) will consider complaints at this stage.
- 6.2 A written acknowledgement of the complaint and the request for it to be heard at Stage 3 of the Procedure will be sent to the parent by the Clerk to the Governors within **five school days of the request being received by the school**.
- 6.3 The letter will inform the parent that the complaint will be heard by the Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP) within **twenty school days** of receiving the complaint at Stage 3. It will also inform the parent of the right to submit any further documents other than the letter of complaint and that these must be made available to the Clerk to the Governors within **five school days** of receipt of the acknowledgement letter. The right to call witnesses to the meeting, subject to the approval of the Chair of the GCP, and the right of the parent to be accompanied by a companion of her/his choice, will also be explained in the letter.
- 6.4 The Clerk to the Governors will send a copy of the letter of acknowledgement of the complaint to the Chair of Governors and/or Headteacher and request a written report in response to the complaint to the GCP within **five school days** of receipt of the letter. The right to call witnesses, subject to the approval of the Chair of the GCP, will also be explained.
- 6.5 The Clerk to the Governors will then convene a GCP meeting, having consulted with all parties on convenient times. The date, time and venue for the meeting will then be confirmed at least **five school days** in advance.
- 6.6 The names of all parties and witnesses (if any) to attend the meeting and all relevant documents to be referred to at the meeting will also be provided by the Chair of the GCP to: the parent; the Chair of Governors and/or Headteacher; and each panel member. This will be provided as soon as possible and, in any event, at least **five school days** prior to the meeting.
- 6.7 The meeting will be held following the procedures for hearing a complaint detailed in Appendix 2.
- 6.8 A written decision will be sent to the parent and the Chair of Governors and/or Headteacher by the Chair of the GCP within **ten school days** of the hearing.
- 6.9 The letter will explain that the decision of the Governors' Complaints Panel is final but that complaints can be taken to the Secretary of State for Education on the grounds that:
 - A Governing Body or Local Authority is acting or proposing to act unreasonably; or
 - The Governing Body or the Local Authority has failed to discharge its duties.

7. Resolving Complaints

- 7.1 At each stage in the procedure the school will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one of 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 complained of 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.
- 7.2 It would be useful if complainants were encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.



The Governors' Complaints Panel

The Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP) should consist of three members of the Governing Body. A Chair of the GCP should also be appointed.

The Governing Body may decide to appoint the three members annually, together with three reserves, designated in the order in which they would be called upon to stand in order to ensure that three governors will be available to meet within the timescales. The Governing Body may wish to consider the advantages of having a parent governor as a member of the panel.

No member of the GCP should have had prior involvement with the complaint. As the Chair of the Governing Body may be involved at an earlier stage in the procedure (particularly where the complaint is about the Headteacher) it may be wise not to include the Chair as a member of the GCP to avoid any possible reference to the Chair being "tainted".

It is not considered appropriate for the Headteacher to be a member of the GCP. The role of the Headteacher would be to attend the panel hearing to give evidence and s/he may choose to invite staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant (subject to the approval of the Chair of the GCP).



**Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP)
Procedures for Hearing the Complaint.**

Introduction

The aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve a reconciliation between the school and the parent.

The Chair of the GCP will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.

Although the meeting will follow the structured order below, given potential sensitivities and anxieties, the Chair will endeavour to ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible and that all parties are put at their ease.

The introduction of new information or witnesses, previously not notified to all parties, would be reason to adjourn the meeting so that everyone has time to consider and respond to the new information.

Order of Meeting

1. The Chair welcomes the parent and his/her companion and introduces the GCP.
2. The Chair explains the purpose of the meeting, the procedure, and that all written evidence has been made available to all parties.
3. The parent/companion explains the complaint, calling in witnesses if appropriate.
4. The GCP may question the parent/companion and witnesses.
5. The parent and companion retire from the meeting.
6. The Chair welcomes the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors (where the complaint has been addressed by the Chair of Governors at Stage 2).
7. The Chair explains the purpose of the meeting, the procedure, and that all written evidence has been made available to all parties.
8. The Headteacher/ Chair of Governors present a response to the complaint, including action taken to address the complaint at stage 1 and 2 of the procedure and calling witnesses, if appropriate.
9. The GCP may question the Headteacher / Chair of Governors.
10. The Headteacher and Chair of Governors retire from the meeting.
11. The parent, together with his/her companion, is invited back into the room to make a final statement, then retires.
12. The Headteacher, together with the Chair of Governors, where applicable, is invited back into the room to make a final statement, then retires.
13. The GCP considers the complaint and reaches a unanimous or majority decision.
The GCP also decides what action (if any) to take to resolve the complaint and, if

- appropriate, recommends changes to ensure similar complaints are not made in future.
14. When a decision has been made, the Chair recalls the parent, then the Headteacher and each is informed of the outcome and any action to be taken.
 15. All outcomes are confirmed in writing to both parties.

