



Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School Complaints Procedure January 2016

'Living, learning and loving happily together, with Christ at the centre'

Introduction

No-one likes criticism but an open organisation will always be willing to listen to concerns and anxieties and be ready to learn from them if appropriate. In a school, most concerns are likely to be expressed by the parents or carers of its pupils, though some may come from pupils themselves, parishioners, or from other interested parties such as neighbours or users of the premises.

In a Catholic school, parental/carers' concerns are of particular importance. As the first educators of their children, parents/carers have a duty to take an active interest in their school. "Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring." (*Gravissimum Educationis*). To this end, "there must be the closest co-operation between parents and the teachers to whom they entrust their children to be educated. In fulfilling their task, teachers are to collaborate closely with the parents and willingly listen to them." (Can.796) In a Catholic School, therefore, dealing with parental/carers' concerns will be an intrinsic part of the school's ethos and mission

Concerns and Complaints

There is a difference between a concern and a complaint. A concern can be defined as a cause of worry, whilst a complaint can be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

Nearly all concerns or questions can be resolved very quickly and informally if parents voice them as soon as they arise. Parents' feedback is always welcome and you are warmly encouraged to voice any concerns straightaway, preferably to the person concerned. In most cases, discussion, explanation, further information or an apology if appropriate will resolve the issue. Our aim is that no concern should ever become a formal complaint.

Occasionally, however, a concern will be too serious to be handled in this way, perhaps needing greater investigation; or the person concerned may not feel that the answers given so far have been acceptable or adequate. In such circumstances, the concern will become a complaint and the formal procedure should be rigorously followed. Even in these cases, every effort should be made to resolve the issue at the lowest possible level of the procedure. It should be very rare indeed that a complaint needs to be decided at the Appeal Stage by a Complaints Appeals Panel. It is very important that all governors and members of staff be familiar with the school complaints procedure and

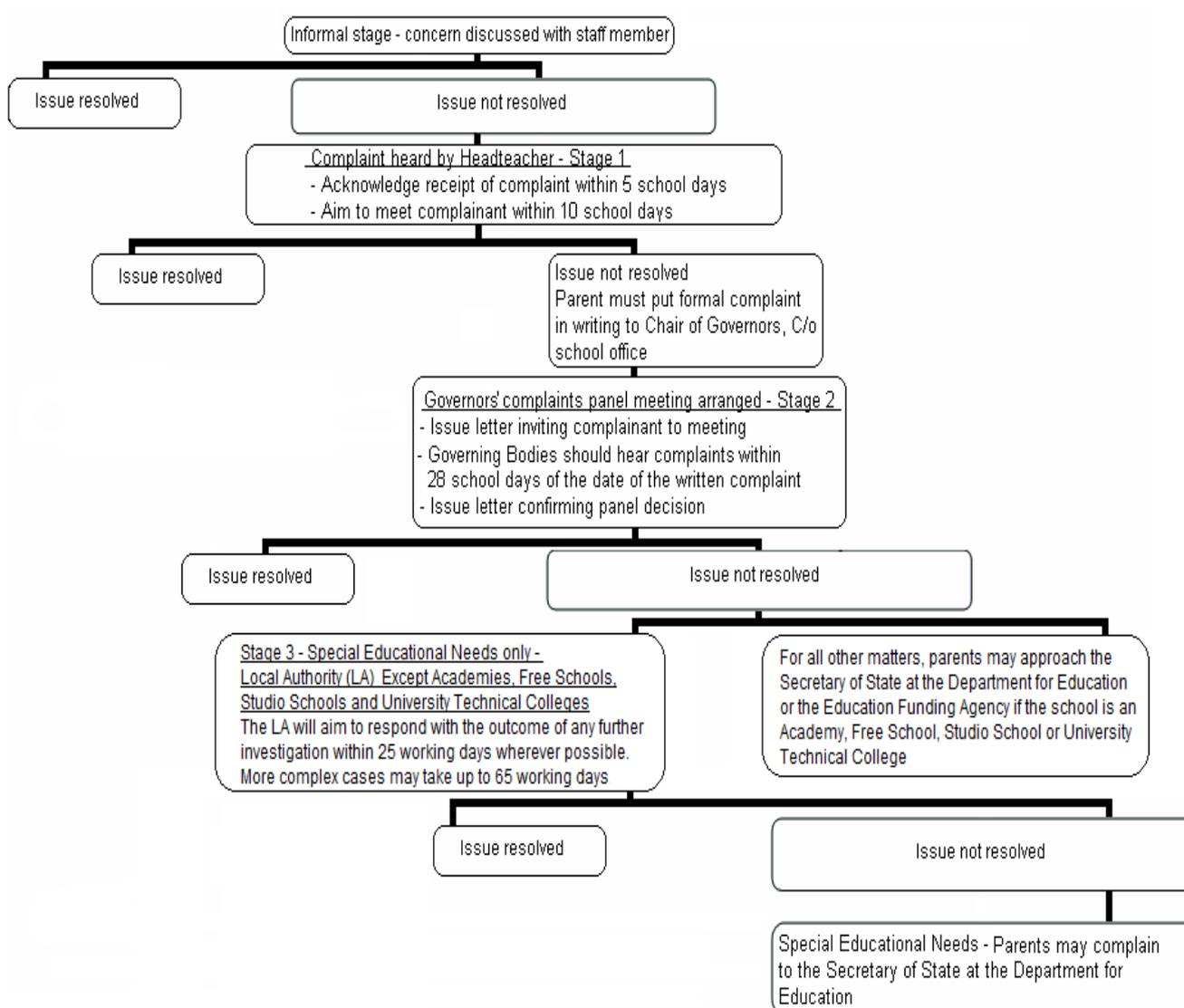
that they know who the complaints co-ordinator for the school is so that they can refer complaints to that person when approached by someone with a complaint. Regular training on complaints procedures is provided by the Diocese and County.

Dealing with Complaints – Formal procedures

The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Sacred Heart Complaints Co-ordinator is Carolyn Hatch, Headteacher.

Flowchart - Summary of Dealing with Complaints



School days are term time only, whilst working days are weekdays throughout the year.

How we will deal with your concerns

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School & Nursery, Merry Hill Rd, Bushey, Herts, WD23 1SU, Tel: 01923493040

HOW TO COMMENT OR COMPLAIN

We care about what you think

Each day this school makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all the children. Your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful for future planning.

You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of this school, though not actually make a complaint - you just want to get something 'off your chest'.

If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, please feel free to contact us using the details listed above.

Our aims

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly.
- If your complaint is urgent we will deal with it more quickly.
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage.
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake.
- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right.
- You will get a full and clear written reply to formal complaints within **28 school days (5½ weeks)**.

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School & Nursery

Website: www.sacredheart682.herts.sch.uk

Email: admin@sacredheart682.herts.sch.uk

Telephone: 01923 493040

How to make a complaint

In the first instance – informal stage

If you have a concern about anything we do, or if you wish to make a complaint, you can do this by telephone, in person or in writing (by letter or email). We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation. If there is something you are not happy about, or you don't understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss it with the class teacher or another appropriate member of staff, such as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) if it is about Special Needs.

We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge something, but if you don't tell us what is worrying you we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right. If the member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to attempt to resolve the matter, you should make an appointment with the Headteacher. You

should be able to sort out your worries but sometimes this is not possible. In this case there is a next step.

First - formal stage

Request a meeting with the Headteacher who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome **within 10 school days (2 weeks)**.

If your first contact is with individual Governors, they will advise you to take up your concerns with the appropriate member of staff or Headteacher. A Governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a Panel in the event of a formal hearing (Stage Two) and should be impartial.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should **write to the Chair of Governors**. If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) or your child's named Special Needs Officer at the Local Authority. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) may also be able to help you.

Second - formal stage

If you remain dissatisfied following Stage 1 and wish to take your complaint further, you will be asked to complete a form or write a letter addressed to the Chair of Governors. In the letter you should:

- Make it clear why you are complaining.
- Say who you have spoken to already.
- Explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Governing Body. This is likely to involve a Panel of Governors. If the Chair of Governors or another Governor has been involved in discussions to help settle the disagreement at Stage 1, s/he should arrange for another Governor to take charge of the investigation. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns.

You should make sure that the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The Chair of the Panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The Chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting. If any member of staff is required by the Governing Body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens, we will inform you in advance.

When the Panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel or the Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be

taken. Our Governing Body will aim to deal with your complaint **within 28 school days (5½ weeks)**.

Further recourse

Most complaints are resolved by this process. Should your complaint not be resolved, your further options are as follows:

- You may complain to the Diocese

For Roman Catholic schools:

The Director of the Education Service, Diocese of Westminster, Vaughan House, 46 Francis Street, London, SW1P 1QN. Email: education@rcdow.org.uk, Website: www.rcdow.org.uk. Telephone: 020 7798 9005.

- You can complain to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education:

The Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Website: www.education.gov.uk
Telephone: 0370 000 2288

In the case of complaints about **Special Educational Needs provision**, you may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager.

It should be noted however that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within **20 working days (4 weeks)** of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint. After **20 working days (4 weeks)**, neither the school nor the Local Authority is under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint any further.

Useful contacts

Advisory Centre for Education

Education Advice & Training
72 Durnsford Road
London
N11 2EJ
Web: www.ace-ed.org.uk
Phone: **0300 0115 142**

POhWER

Hertlands House
Primett Road
Stevenage
SG1 3EE
Web: www.pohwer.net
Phone: **0300 456 2370**

Children's Legal Centre

Riverside Office Centre
Century House North
North Station Road
Colchester
Essex

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

Egerton House
Tower Road
Birkenhead
Wirral

CO1 1RE
Web: www.childrenslegalcentre.com
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

CH41 1FN
Web: www.nyas.net
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs & Disability Information Advice Support Service – formerly Parent Partnership)
Registry Office Block
CHR102
County Hall
Hertford
SG13 8DF
Web: www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership
Email: parent.partnership@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Phone: **01992 555847**

Family Lives
(Formerly Parentline Plus)
15-17 The Broadway
Hatfield
Hertfordshire
AL9 5HZ
Web: www.familylives.org.uk
Phone: **0808 800 2222**

