

**Complaints Procedure** **Policy**

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| Date reviewed: October 2024 |
| Date of next review: September 2025 |

**Principles**

The school’s priority is to serve the needs of pupils and parents. We try to serve as efficiently and as courteously as possible but things can go wrong. We welcome any feedback received from parents, carers, pupils and third-parties as an opportunity to improve the quality of the services we offer.

The following general principles will apply:

* The desirability of settling differences informally
* The need to deal with concerns in a fair, open and prompt manner, without prejudice
* The need for more formal mechanisms for dealing fairly and effectively with complaints which have proved impossible to settle informally
* Ensuring that parents, staff and Governors are informed of the procedures

Wherever possible, concerns about the service St Bede’s Catholic Primary School provides will be resolved by informal means. Staff will always strive to do their very best for all students, supporting parents in the best way that they can.

Anyone who has concerns regarding matters relating to school should first discuss the matter with the school. Concerns or complaints about school issues should be raised, in the first instance, with school staff.

The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to a formal procedure. Where you have a concern about any aspect of the school or your child’s education or wellbeing, raise this with your child’s class teacher via the phone or in person. In the majority of cases, they will be able to address your concerns on the spot or arrange a meeting with you to discuss the matter further.

All concerns will be dealt with confidentially, although a member of staff may need to make some notes if they feel that the matter may need to be taken further or it may occur again in the future.

**CONCERN / COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE:**

The following procedure will be invoked only when all informal means have been unsuccessful and the person raising the concern wishes to make a formal complaint.

**Who can raise a concern or complain?** Anyone can raise a concern or complain if they receive a service, seek a service or are affected by the school.

**How can a concern / complaint be made?** Concerns or complaints may be made in person, by telephone or made in writing. A person with a concern or complaint will normally seek to contact the member of staff responsible for the relevant issue. All staff will seek to help a complainant even where the issue is not that individual’s area of responsibility.

**Safeguarding**

Where a concern has been raised that indicates a child’s wellbeing or safety is at risk, the school is under a duty of care to report this immediately to the local authority. This action will be completed according to the school’s safeguarding policy.

**Social Media**

In order for a concern or complaint to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, the school requests that complainants do not discuss their concern / complaint publically via social media. The school will respond to complainants confidentially and we expect complainants to observe this confidentiality also.

**INFORMAL COMPLAINT**

An informal complaint is an initial approach by an individual to the school expressing dissatisfaction with some aspect of the service, its action or inaction. Informal complaints, however made, are complaints which are resolved quickly and simply, usually at the point of service delivery, and do not involve detailed or lengthy investigation.

A person with a complaint will normally seek to contact the member of staff responsible for the relevant issue.

**The Stage of the Complaints Procedure**

**Stage 1: Complaint heard by a member of the Senior Management Team**

A member of the Senior Management Team will write to the complainant enclosing a Complaint Form. Once returned, a member of staff (not the subject of the complainant or involved) will be assigned (impartially and objectively, and keeping accurate notes) to:

* Meet with the complainant or contact them to establish:
* What has happened so far and who has been involved,
* The nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved,
* What the complainant feels would put things right,
* Interview those involved in the matter and those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish,
* All efforts will be made to arrive at a fair appraisal
* Areas of agreement and of misunderstanding will be noted
* Identify steps to resolve the issues, communicating and acting upon them in a positive, reassuring manner. These may include:
* An explanation which warrants no further action
* An apology
* An acknowledgement that the matter could have been handled differently
* A description of steps to be taken to ensure that it will not happen again
* An undertaking to review school policies in light of this complaint.

**Stage 2: Complaint heard by the Headteacher**

If the complaint is not satisfied, the matter will be referred to the Headteacher who will:

* Acknowledge receipt of the complaint
* Evaluate the substance of the matter, obtaining additional information if necessary
* Determine whether Stage 1 was handled appropriately
* Decide upon further action if necessary
* Inform the complainant and those involved.

**Stage 3: Complaint heard by Appeal Panel of Governing Body**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, he/she must write to the Chair of Governors giving details of the complaint. The Chair or a representative will convene a Complaints Panel.

Complaints must **not** be raised with the whole Local Governors Committee at any stage since this would compromise the impartiality of a Panel for a possible disciplinary hearing should a complaint prove to be serious.

* The panel will comprise of three Governors
* A Chair will be agreed at the meeting
* No Governor with any prior involvement or relationship with those involved may sit on the panel
* The hearing will be in private and the tone will be non-adversarial
* The aim is to consider the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the School and the complainant
* If not possible, the panel will establish the facts and assure the complainant that the complaint has been taken seriously
* The complainant will be invited
* Others involved may be invited if the panel considers this helpful
* The meeting will be clerked and minutes retained

All complaints will be dealt with in a timely manner and a resolution will be sought as quickly as is possible in each case.

**Roles for Stage 3**

* **The Clerk will:**
  + Set the date, time and venue, giving between five and ten days’ notice
  + Collate papers and send them to all parties in advance
  + Record the proceedings
  + Notify all parties of the panel’s decision
* **The Chair of Governors will:**
  + Notify the Clerk to arrange the panel
  + Check that correct procedure is followed
* **The Chair of the Panel will:**
  + Explain the remit of the panel to all parties
  + Check that no panel member has had any involvement or has any vested interest
  + Maintain a tone of courtesy and respect in keeping with the Christian ethos of

St Bede’s Catholic Primary School

* + Give each party the opportunity to put the case and ask questions
  + Ensure that issues are addressed
  + Identify key findings based upon fact
  + See that the Clerk notifies all parties of the Panel’s decision in writing within five days

**Checklist for the Panel Hearing**

The Panel needs to take the following points into account:

* The hearing is as informal as possible
* Witnesses are only required to attend for that part of the hearing in which they give their evidence
* After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain the complaint, and call his/her witnesses where required
* The Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after they have spoken
* The Headteacher is then invited to explain the School’s actions and call any School 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 his/her complaint
* The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the School’s actions and response to the complaint
* Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues
* The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the Panel within a set time scale

**Publicising the Complaints Procedure**

Reference is made to the Complaints Procedure Policy in the School Prospectus. Copies will be sent to anyone who indicates that they wish to make a complaint, prior to the start of the process.

**Conclusion**

St Bede’s Catholic Primary School hopes this procedure will not be needed. For the very rare occasion when it is, it will be followed faithfully and objectively. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the Chair of Governors will inform him/her that the procedure has been followed and is now closed.

**APPENDIX 1 DEFINITIONS**

**COMPLAINTS**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the school or their staff affecting an individual or group.

A complaint is not:

* A request for a service
* A request for information or explanation of school policy or practice
* A matter for which there is a right of appeal with the Local Authority or to an independent body or a legal remedy

It should be noted that even where an appeal procedure is in place, a complaint could still arise regarding the way that procedure is operated.

**INFORMAL COMPLAINTS**

An informal complaint is one which can be resolved locally and quickly, which does not require an in-depth investigation, and which generally does not require to be put in writing.

**FORMAL COMPLAINTS**

A formal complaint is one which cannot be immediately resolved to service users’ satisfaction, and therefore requires an investigation and which is generally put in writing.

**ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS**

The school does not wish to receive anonymous complaints and will not undertake to act on information received this way.

**APPENDIX 2 EXAMPLE OF A COMPLAINT RECORD FORM (could be used for Stage 1**

**and Stage 2)**

**PART A: RECORD OF COMPLAINT**

**Complainant’s Name:**

**Address:**

**Telephone number:**

**Details of the complaint:**

**Date complaint made:**

**Action already completed to resolve the matter:**

**Complainants view of what might resolve the issue:**

**PART B: ACTION TAKEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**Complaint investigated by:**

**Action (with dates):**

**Date of formal meeting with complainant:**

**Outcome of the meeting:**