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## St. Catherines RC Primary School

### Handling Complaints about the School

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#### **Our Policy is to:**

- ❑ Promote an understanding of the school's mission, values and work
- ❑ Listen to our pupils, parents and other members of the school community
- ❑ Welcome complaints as a positive means of promoting pupil/parent satisfaction
- ❑ Use complaints as a means of identifying opportunities to improve services
- ❑ Seek to resolve complaints swiftly
- ❑ Have clear and published procedures for dealing with complaints
- ❑ Keep complainants informed about progress as well as the eventual outcome
- ❑ Provide redress where a complaint is found to have substance
- ❑ Monitor the pattern and frequency of complaint at senior level
- ❑ Review regularly the effectiveness of complaints procedures

#### **Procedures**

The school's priority is to serve the needs of pupils and parents. We try to serve as efficiently and as courteously as possible. We believe that our school community is based on Gospel values which inform every action, every interaction, every relationship. Because we are human, we won't get everything right all of the time and things can go wrong. We welcome complaints, comments, compliments and celebrations 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 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

All parties dealing with complaints shall seek to deal with each stage within 15 days of receiving notification of the complaint or of the continuing dissatisfaction of the complainant. In practice this shall happen within one working week in most cases.

Special procedures are available for complaints regarding the curriculum, collective worship or the way in which pupils' special needs are met

### **Complaints about the school**

Complaints about school issues should be raised, in the first instance, with school staff. Anyone can complain if they receive a service, seek a service or are affected by the school.

### **How a complaint can be made**

Complaints may be made in person, by telephone or made in writing. A person with a 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.

### **INFORMAL COMPLAINT**

An informal complaint is an initial approach by an individual to the school expressing dissatisfaction with some aspects of the school's work, its action or inaction. Informal complaints, however made, are complaints that 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.

Should the complaint not be resolved the complainant will be referred to the Headteacher or the Deputy Headteacher. The Head or Deputy will seek to deal with the issue informally.

Should an initial informal discussion not resolve the situation, and the complainant indicates their continuing dissatisfaction, then the Headteacher will convene an interview to review the issue in detail.

Users who make informal complaints will be given information regarding follow up procedures in the event that they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their initial complaint and wish to take the matter further.

### **FORMAL COMPLAINT**

A complaint becomes formal when the user remains dissatisfied after making an informal complaint or, alternatively, when, from the outset, a complaint cannot be dealt with simply and quickly and requires investigation. Formal complaints must be put in writing.

When a complaint becomes formal, care will be taken to:

- Clarify the complaint
- Clarify the outcome sought

- Check whether the complainant needs support of any kind to explain the investigation procedure.

**Once a complaint has become formal:**

- The progress of the complaint will be monitored by the Headteacher
- A full written response will be made within 15 working days or, where this is not possible, a reply should be sent indicating progress to date and an estimate of time to make a full response;
- The complainant will be given the name and tel.no of the person dealing with the complaint;
- The complainant will be advised how to proceed if not satisfied.

A complaint of serious maladministration should be progressed immediately as a formal complaint. The Chair of the Governing body should be the first person to approach where the matter could involve disciplinary or legal action against the Headteacher.

Where a complaint involves an allegation of financial irregularity then the City Treasurer will be advised by the Head or Chair as appropriate.

The papers relating to the complaint will be passed to the Chair of Governors who will decide how the complaint is to be progressed.

The Chair will ensure:

- The complaint is quickly referred to the relevant Committee ( or to the Head if the complaints procedures at that level have not been exhausted);
- The complaint is not reported to the whole Governing Body until it is resolved, and then not in detail;
- All parties to the complaint are given a fair hearing;
- The decision of the Committee is given in writing to the complainant;
- The complainant is told of any right of appeal if the decision is given against him or her.

**EXTERNAL REVIEW**

If the complainant remains unhappy after the matter has been considered by the Governing body, then the complainant will be asked to contact the Diocesan Education Service, or the Head of the Admin. Dept at the Civic Centre.

## **OMBUDSMAN**

Where a complainant indicates they remain dissatisfied with the result of the review carried out, they will be advised that they may refer the matter to a Local councillor or to the Local Government Ombudsman and be given the relevant details.

## **REMEDY**

Where a complaint is found to be justified a remedy should be provided. A remedy needs to be appropriate to the complaint. In virtually all cases the remedy will be an apology. In some cases the remedy will be the provision of a service desired by the complainant. In other cases, a change of procedure to prevent future difficulties for the complainant, or for school users in general, may be the appropriate remedy.

## **ANNUAL REVIEW**

Annually a brief report will be presented to the Governing Body, which will detail:

- The number of complaints
- The subjects concerned
- The time taken to resolve complaints
- The assessment of complainant satisfaction
- Changes brought about as a result of reviewing complaints

This will be normally undertaken in the Summer Term for the previous year.

## **LA: POWER TO DIRECT**

Under the Education Reform Act 1988, the LA has no power to direct a school in relation to a complaint from a parent or pupil, unless there is a statutory basis for doing so. However, it may act as arbiter and advise a school where a complaint has not been resolved by the staff or governors. Any parent who is unsure of procedures, or who feels that their complaint has not been considered properly by the school, may contact officers of the Education department for further advice. The above information also reflects the position of the Diocesan Schools Commission