



Nurturing excellence in education

ST JOSEPH'S NS PARENTAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Board of Management together with the Principal set the direction and tone of the school in all that they do and are committed to working with parents in the best interests of their childrens' education. The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to address complaints raised by parents/guardians.

- 1.1** The procedure covers all matters relating to the actions of staff employed in the school and the application of school procedures, where they affect individual pupils. The school takes informal concerns seriously at the earliest possible stage in an effort to reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.
- 1.2** **Where it becomes evident at an early stage that a matter should be dealt with according to other established procedures or appeals mechanisms, this Complaints Procedure will be set aside in favour of the agreed procedure such as Child Protection, Special Education, Admissions, Suspensions and Expulsions, Grievance, Discipline, Bullying and Harassment or Unsatisfactory Teaching Procedure.**
- 1.3** The school will not deal with anonymous complaints (except for those concerning child protection matters) and therefore these procedures do not provide for a resolution of anonymous complaints.

2. AIMS

- 2.1** In operating this Complaints Procedure we aim to:
 - encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
 - allow swift handling of a complaint within established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of progress;
 - keep people informed of progress;
 - ensure a full and fair investigation;
 - have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved;
 - respect confidentiality;
 - address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary; and
 - provide information to the school's Senior Management Team and Board of Management so that services can be improved.

2.2 The procedures are designed to be:

- easily accessible and publicised. A copy of the procedures will be placed on the school's website and available on request from the school;
- simple to understand and use;
- impartial; and
- non-adversarial;

3. WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THESE PROCEDURES

3.1 Your rights as a person making a complaint

In dealing with your complaint we will ensure that you receive:

- fair treatment;
- courtesy;
- a timely response;
- accurate advice;
- respect for your privacy – complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility that we may have to consult with other appropriate parties about your complaint; and
- reasons for our decisions.

Where the complaint is justified we will acknowledge this and address the complaint you have raised. If, after investigation, it is judged there are no grounds for your complaint, you will be advised accordingly.

3.2 Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint

In making your complaint we would expect that you:

- raise issues in a timely manner;
- treat our staff with respect and courtesy;
- provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues you raise; and
- use these procedures fully and engage in them at the appropriate levels.

3.3 Rights of parties involved during the investigation

The process is non-adversarial and does not provide a role for any other statutory or non-statutory body.

Complainant

The complainant may be accompanied by another person where it is accepted, by the Principal and Board of Management, that this will assist the investigation and resolution of the complaint.

Staff

Staff may seek the advice and support from their professional body or trade union and may also be

accompanied by another person where it is accepted, by the Principal and Board of Management, that this will assist the investigation and resolution of the complaint.

A member of staff who is directly referred to in a complaint will be provided with a written copy of the complaint and details of any information brought by the parent/carer before being required to respond to the matters raised.

Legal Representation

Legal representation or representation by person(s) acting in a professional capacity **is not** permitted within this procedure

This procedure does not take away from the statutory rights of any of the participants.

3.4 Where the complainant is a Board of Management.

Where the complainant is a member of the Board of Management, they will play no part in the management or appeal of the complaint as set out in this procedure.

4. WHO WILL DEAL WITH YOUR COMPLAINT?

At the informal stage your complaint should be raised and dealt with by the teacher and Department head concerned. If you proceed to the formal part of the process, the Principal will assume responsibility for the process, unless s/he is the subject of the complaint, in which case the Chair of the Board of Management will assume responsibility. Should it be necessary, the Board of Management will be responsible for establishing a Complaints Sub-Committee to investigate and resolve the matter.

5. MAKING A COMPLAINT

Formal Stage 1 Discussion

1.1 Parent/guardian meets teacher



A parent/legal guardian who wishes to make a complaint in respect of their own child, should, seek an appointment with the teacher concerned with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings with the teacher can be convened as appropriate.

1.2 Parent/guardian meets Principal



Where the parent/legal guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the teacher, they should seek an appointment with the Principal with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings can be convened by the Principal as appropriate.

1.3 Parent/guardian meets Chairperson



Where the complaint remains unresolved, the parent/legal guardian should seek an appointment with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings can be convened by the Chairperson as appropriate.

Complaint resolved

The complaint may be resolved during this stage.



Formal Stage 2 Written (10 days)

2.1 Written complaint sent to Chairperson



If the complaint has not been resolved at stage 1, the parent/legal guardian who wishes to pursue the matter further should submit the complaint in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Management. This commences stage 2

2.2 Chairperson provides a copy to the teacher

The Chairperson should provide a copy of the written complaint to the teacher against whom the complaint has been made, without delay

2.3 Chairperson convenes meeting(s)



The Chairperson should seek to resolve the complaint between the teacher and the parent/legal guardian within 10 school days of the commencement of stage 2.1. This may require one or more meetings to be convened by the Chairperson with the teacher/ parent/legal guardian and other school personnel as deemed appropriate by the Chairperson.

Complaint resolved The complaint may be resolved at this stage.



Formal Stage 3 Board of Management (20 days)

3.1 Chairperson makes a formal report to the Board

If the complaint remains unresolved following stage 2 and the parent/legal guardian wishes to pursue the matter, they should inform the Chairperson in writing of this fact. The Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board of Management within 10 days of receipt of this written statement. At this meeting, the Board can decide to proceed to either stage 3.2 or 3.3.

3.2 Complaint concluded

Where the Board considers the complaint, the process may be concluded at this stage, if the board considers that:

- The complaint is frivolous/vexatious
- The complaint has already been investigated by the board;
- The complaint is more appropriately dealt with through a more relevant DE circular, or;
- where recourse to law has been initiated.

Where the Board determines the complaint is concluded at this stage, the parent/legal guardian should be so informed within five days of the Board meeting.



3.3 Proceed to a hearing

Where the Board decides to proceed to a hearing, it should proceed as follows:

- the teacher should be informed that the complaint is proceeding to a full hearing and the Chairperson must ensure the teacher has been supplied with all documents which are being considered by the Board.
- the Board should arrange a meeting with the parent/legal guardian if it considers such to be required. The parent/legal guardian is entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting.
- the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of their case to the Board. The teacher is entitled to be represented by a friend or a union representative, who may be accompanied for the purpose of assistance and note taking.
- the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the board as the employer in response to the complaint. This written statement will be confidential to the employer and will not be shared with any third party.
- the meeting of the Board of Management referred to in 3(b), (c) and (d) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3.1. in so far as possible.

Formal Stage 4 Decision (5 days)

4.1 Written decision from Chairperson



The Board will consider the complaint and the response provided and will adjudicate on the matter. The Chairperson should convey the decision of the Board in writing to the teacher and the parent/legal guardian(s) within five days of the meeting held at stage 3.3.

4.2 Complaint concluded

The decision of the Board shall be final.

