

St Mary's CE High School

Complaints & Conciliation Procedure

Date of Review: Spring 2017
Date of next Review: Spring 2020

Signed: Chair of Governors

Signed: Head Teacher

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ST MARY'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL COMPLAINTS AND CONCILIATION PROCEDURE SUMMARY

Policy Statement

This complaints and conciliation procedure demonstrates that the School recognises its accountability to parents/carers or community users and accepts the need to provide redress in cases if and when the School has acted inappropriately. It helps the School to ensure the highest standards of service. In keeping with the Christian ethos of the School, we work in partnership with parents/carers and encourage parents/carers to discuss issues that arise at an early stage to avoid escalation to complaint level. Most issues and concerns can be resolved in this way. The following procedures are used when this process does not resolve a matter.

This policy and procedure is for the benefit of students, parents/carers and learning community of St Mary's CE High School. It is made available to parents/carers, staff and students and will be applied to any complaint registered against the School except in respect of the following, for each of which there is a separate policy:

1. Child protection allegations
2. Exclusions
3. Financial misconduct
4. Appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications

In the event of a complaint involving one or more of the above, the School will follow Local Authority or Academy agreed procedures as appropriate.

A parent/carer, for the purposes of this policy is a parent/carer who has a child currently at the School to whose experience the complaint relates. A complaint must be made within 28 calendar days of the incident to which it refers. This applies also where a child has left the school roll during the 28 day period.

In keeping with the Christian ethos of the School, Governors expect that most concerns can be resolved informally by working in partnership and it will use its best endeavours to resolve any complaints in this way. If informal procedures fail to resolve the issue, a formal complaint about any matter, other than the exceptions detailed above, should be submitted in writing to the Head Teacher. Every complaint shall receive fair and proper consideration and timely response. This will usually be within ten school days. The aim is always to resolve complaints either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of students, parents/carers, staff and the Governors of the School.

Complaints are recorded and monitored and it is noted when they are resolved. A written record is kept and serious complaints and their outcomes are reviewed by the Head Teacher and Governors.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting and inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Conciliation / Resolution

The aim is that complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally by working together to address concerns raised.

If parents/carers have a concern they should normally contact their child's appropriate teacher or Director/Year Leader. In many cases the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parent/carer's satisfaction. If the Director/Year Leader cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for her/him to consult senior staff or the Head Teacher.

If the parent/carer considers that the concern raised has not been resolved, an informal complaint should be raised with a member of the senior leadership team or the Head Teacher. The concern/complaint may be put in writing to clarify the nature of the complaint. If it is made clear that the correspondence does not yet constitute a formal complaint the Head Teacher will try to resolve the issue on an informal basis.

Staff dealing with any concerns/complaints will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within fourteen school days or in the event that the senior member of staff and the parent/carer fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parent/carer will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Note that the parent/carer and school staff may agree that it will take longer than fourteen school days to address the concern fully.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved in an informal basis, then the parent/carer should put their complaint in writing to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Head Teacher will speak to the parent/carer concerned, normally within seven school days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If this is not possible, the Head Teacher will advise the parent/carer in writing. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

Further investigation may be deemed appropriate, in which case the Head Teacher may delegate this task to a senior member of staff. Written records will be kept of all meetings, conversations and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head Teacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents/carers will be informed of this decision in writing no later than fourteen school days after the initial contact following receipt of the complaint. The Head Teacher will also give reasons for the decision.

If parents/carers are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If parents/carers seek to use Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should refer their complaint, in writing, to the Chair of the Governors, St Mary's CE High School, Lieutenant Ellis Way, Cheshunt, Herts, EN7 5FB.

In most cases, a nominated governor will speak to the parent/carer concerned, normally within seven school days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. Should it still not be possible to reach a resolution, the Chair of Governors will then convene a Complaints Panel under the chairmanship of a nominated Governor. The parent/carer should detail the nature of the complaint, the reason that they consider the matter has not been resolved and the desired outcome.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of the panel shall be independent of the management and running of the School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Panel Chair, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within twenty eight (28) school days.

The Panel will require that particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five school days prior to the hearing. The Panel may request additional information from either or both parties to help them address the matter.

The parents/carers may be accompanied by a friend or relation, but not a legal representative acting in that capacity. The Clerk to the Governors must be given five school days' notice if the friend or relation is legally qualified.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent/carer's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

At the discretion and invitation of the Panel, a witness or witnesses may attend to give their evidence at the hearing. Notice of a request for a witness or witnesses to attend the hearing should be given in writing to the Clerk of the Panel at least seven school days prior to the

hearing. The notice should, where possible, include a written statement by the witness or witnesses relating to the complaint. The decision of the Panel as to whether a witness' or witnesses' evidence is heard or considered is final.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts it considers relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within twenty eight (28) school days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents/carers informing them of its decision and reasons for the decision. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents/carers, the Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors.