



ST AUGUSTINE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Complaints Policy 2016-17

Introduction

1.1 We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children, and that the Headteacher and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents. The following policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

Aims and objectives

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

Not all concerns are complaints. A concern is an issue raised by a parent, pupil or other person that is resolved quickly and informally. Most concerns can be resolved by the person to whom the concern is addressed in an informal manner.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is a clear written or oral expression of dissatisfaction with the service that a school provides.

1 INFORMAL STAGE: Dealing with concerns

1.1 Problems are always best resolved informally and speedily. If something happens that does not seem to be in keeping with your expectation of St. Augustine's Catholic Primary School you can discuss this with your child's teacher or with a school leader (This will be either the Headteacher or Deputy Head teacher) by making an appointment via the school office.

1.2 We always encourage all parties to suggest what they see as a realistic resolution to the concern.

2 Dealing with Complaints

If initial attempts to resolve the concern are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further as a complaint then the following procedure can be followed.

2.1 Informing school leader of the complaint

An appointment should be made to discuss the complaint with a senior leader (This will be either the Head of School or Deputy Head teacher) who will establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved. She/ he will clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.

2.2 Investigating the complaint

The school leader dealing with the complaint will speak to those involved to ensure that he/ she has a full and unbiased picture of the matter. If the complaint is found to be valid he/ she will clarify what the complainant feels would put things right. Full notes will be kept of all discussions.

2.3 Resolving the complaint

Once the school leader has looked into the complaint he / she will seek to resolve the matter as appropriate. This might be:

- an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part
- an apology
- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Resolution will also include trying to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred in order to create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Where a complaint is made about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors or a governor nominated by the Chair, will investigate the complaint.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint or if the complaint cannot be dealt with by the procedure above then the following Formal Complaint Procedure can be followed.

If a complaint is about a member of staff and the school leader investigates and finds there are no grounds for the complaint then this should not become a complaint about the school leader. The complaint remains as originally described and can then be taken to the formal stage.

3 Formal Complaint – First stage

- 3.1 The Chair of Governors or a governor nominated by the Chair will investigate a formal complaint. The Chair or nominated governor will carry out an investigation to review the way in which the school handled the complaint and ensure that the issues have been dealt with properly and fairly.
- 3.2 The person making the complaint will have the opportunity to submit written evidence on the complaint. The investigating governor will normally write to the person raising the complaint with the outcome of this process within 15 working days of receiving the complaint.
- 3.3 If it becomes apparent that the complaint about a member of staff leads to a disciplinary or capability issue, then the matter will be dealt with under the school's disciplinary or capability procedure rather than the complaints procedure. The complainant will be notified if this is the case but will not be entitled to know which procedure or the final outcome.

4 Formal complaint second stage

- 4.1 If at the end of the first stage of the formal complaint the complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant he / she may take the matter a stage further. This must be done in writing to the school within 15 working days of receipt of the letter from the investigating governor.
- 4.2 A panel of three governors will meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision about it on behalf of the governing body. The panel will consist of governors who have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, or connection with the complainant. The meeting will normally take place within 15 working days.
- 4.3 The complainant will have the opportunity to submit written evidence on the complaint prior to the meeting of the panel and also to attend and be accompanied by a friend/partner to put his /her case. The school leaders will be given the same opportunities.
- 4.4 The panel will write to the complainant with its conclusion within ten working days of the meeting.
- 4.5 The decision of the panel is final.

5 Who to appeal to next

- 5.1 If the complaint is not resolved, a parent may make representation to the LEA. Further information about this process is available from the school or from the LEA. A further meeting is chaired by an independent person, who considers all the evidence and makes a further judgement in an attempt to resolve the complaint.
- 5.2 If any parent is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then s/he is entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education.

6. Allegations about members of staff

If an allegation of a child protection nature is made against a member of staff then the school will follow the procedures outlined in its Safeguarding Policy and refer the case to the Local Authority Designated Officer for guidance and advice.

7. Whistleblowing

Advice for staff and parents about whistleblowing can be found in the school's Whistleblowing Policy.

8. Monitoring and Review

The governing body monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. All formal complaints received by the school are logged and each resolution recorded. Governors receive a termly report on any complaints made through the formal procedures and keep this policy, and all school policies under review. If necessary changes to our complaints procedure will follow the review.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governors in line with any changes to statutory policy made by the DfE.

Appendix 1

1. Informal stage – speak to class teacher or SLT

2. If no resolution from informal stage – raise complaint with Deputy Head or Headteacher

3. Deputy Head or Headteacher investigates and resolves complaint with parent / carer.

4. Formal complaint to GB. Complaint made to COG. Complaint investigated, resolution offered.

5. Formal complaint.
Panel convened.

6. If complainant not satisfied then complaint should be taken to Lewisham Education Authority or Secretary of State for Education