

St. James the Great Roman Catholic Primary and Nursery School



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Date Created: Spring 2011
Date Reviewed:

At St. James the Great, we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which pupils will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially. We recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and that parents, carers and members of the public may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the school.

Rationale

The purpose of the Complaints policy is:

- To provide an effective means for all stakeholders to inform us of any dissatisfaction or ideas for improvements they may have.
- To confirm the individuals right to complain or share their opinions.
- To ensure that complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible, fairly (for all parties) and with the minimum of inconvenience to the complainant.
- To ensure that complaints are used to develop overall improvements in the way that we work.

Scope

These procedures do not cover complaints relating to the following matters, which are dealt with under other (statutory) arrangements:-

- Admission of pupils.
- Exclusions of pupils.
- Assessments of special educational needs.
- Curriculum.

It should be noted that schools do not need to consider complaints made more than one year after the incident/situation. In this case, the school will write to the complainant explaining why this is the case.

It will be at the Head teacher's discretion whether or not anonymous complaints are investigated.

Procedures

Informal Stage

Most complaints/issues can be resolved informally and quickly by discussion with the member of staff concerned if the first instance, appropriate Key Stage Coordinator or Deputy Head.

Alternatively parents/carers can write to the appropriate member of staff outlining the issue clearly.

Any complaint/issue that is put in writing should be written clearly outlining all the issues and what it is hoped that the preferred outcome should be. All complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 3 – 5 working days.

The member of staff will make notes if appropriate during the meeting. Parents/carers, or other complainants, can ask for a copy of these notes.

Only where the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of such discussions will it be necessary to move to the next formal stage of the procedures.

Formal Stage

Stage 1

If a parent/care, or other complainant, is still dissatisfied after the informal stage, they, or the member of staff can refer the matter to the Head teacher. This can be done in writing, as this will often make the situation clear to all involved parties.

The Head teacher will offer a meeting with the parent/carer or other complainant at a mutually convenient time. At the meeting, and through discussion, the Head teacher will clarify what the issues are. The hopes of what the parent/carer is trying to achieve will also be discussed. Together all parties will agree an acceptable outcome. This should be to the satisfaction of all parties involved. These should be written down and agreed by all parties so there is no misunderstanding. Again parents/carers, or other complainants, should be given a copy of this.

If the issue is complex the Head teacher may need to speak to other staff and pupils to investigate the concerns. This should happen within 10 school days. If this timescale cannot be met the Head teacher should inform the parent/carer, or other complainant, that this will take longer, explain the reasons for this and give a timescale for when the investigation will be completed.

Stage 2

After meeting with the Head teacher if the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, the complaint can be referred to the Chair of Governors. This can either be in writing to the Chair at the school address, or alternatively the school can ask the Chair of Governors to contact the parent/carer direct. The Head teacher can also refer the complaint to the Chair of Governors.

If the Head teacher is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight to the Chair of Governors and miss out Stage 1. The Chair of Governors may ask for the complaint to be put in writing (if this has not already happened).

The Chair of Governors will offer to meet with the parent/carer or other complainant, at a mutually convenient time.

The Chair of Governors has 15 school days to investigate the complaint. If it cannot be resolved within this time, the Chair will inform the complainant and explain why it is taking

longer. Reasons for this may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays. The Chair of Governors should, however, give a realistic timescale for when the complaint should be resolved. The Chair should inform the complainant of when it is expected that the investigation should be completed.

Stage 3

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, or Chair of Governors feels that it is necessary, s/he can set up a Complaints Committee to consider the complaint. The Chair of Governors will decide if this is appropriate.

If the Chair of Governors can resolve the complaint there is no need to hold a Complaints Committee meeting. As far as possible it is recommended that Complaints Committees are a last resort.

The Chair of Governors can appoint an Investigating Officer to gather evidence and conduct preliminary interviews on the chair's behalf. The Investigating Officer will provide a detailed report of his/her investigation of the complaint. Parents/carers should be given a copy of this report. It is important that the Investigating Officer is seen as impartial. So whilst the Investigating Officer is another Governor, s/he cannot be a member of the associated Complaints Committee.

The Complaints Committee is made up of three members of the school's Governing Body. Sometimes Governors need to be brought in from other schools' Governing Bodies because the school's Governors are 'tainted' because they have prior knowledge of the complaint or the circumstance surrounding it.

The Complaints Committee should meet at a time convenient to all parties. The complainant, the Head teacher, the Chair of Governors and any member of staff the complaint is about will be invited to the meeting. Any person invited can bring a friend or supporter if they wish. The Complaints Committee will consider any written material, and also give the person making the complaint and the Head teacher, Chair of Governors and staff an opportunity to state their case and to question others present. The Committee will ensure that all present are treated fairly. The meeting will be minuted by the Clerk to Governors and everyone present will be given a copy of the minutes.

The Committee will give its decision, in writing, within five school days after the meeting, along with the reasons for their decision.

Unresolved Complaints

If after this school based process the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's, or other complainant's satisfaction, they should write to the Secretary of State if it is a general complaint.

It should be noted that the Secretary of State will not consider complaints from parents about matters covered by this procedure unless all the steps set out below have been taken.

All complaints will be recorded formally by the school in a central log.

Linked Policies

- Staff Grievance
- Staff Disciplinary