

COMPLAINTS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The school aims to work in partnership with parents and the community in order to meet the needs of the pupils in its care. From time to time, despite the school's best efforts, complaints can arise.

St. Nicholas School will treat complaints seriously and fairly. There will be an open and transparent process that encourages constructive dialogue with the complainant. The school recognises that an effective complaints procedure can contribute to the general improvement process for the school.

POLICY INTO PRACTICE

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

There will be many contacts with the school by parents or members of the community, most of which are routinely dealt with by school staff. Very often, these will not be complaints at all and are easily resolved. There are other occasions when a judgement needs to be made as to whether the degree of dissatisfaction amounts to a complaint. This could refer to a decision that has been made or an action taken or the manner in which particular pupils or adults have been treated. If the member of school staff initially responding to the complainant is in any doubt that the explanation provided is not adequate the complainant should be referred on to the Headteacher.

A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. A complaint may be generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of notice'.

Some complaints about the school have to follow a statutory or formalised process and procedures already exist for complaints about the following:

- Curriculum and Religious Education
- Child protection
- Admissions and exclusions
- KCC financial regulations
- Legal/contractual matters
- Personnel matters including grievances

PROCEDURE

- If the concern cannot be resolved satisfactorily by the staff member first approached then the Headteacher needs to be involved.
- For some more serious concerns parents or members of the community should speak directly to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher in the Headteacher's absence. If the complaint is about the Headteacher then the Chair of governors should be contacted directly through the school office.
- When a complaint is made it will be logged and a record will be kept of outcomes, subsequent discussions and advice received and given.
- If the complaint cannot be resolved by the Headteacher (or the Chair of Governors in the instance of a complaint against the Headteacher) then it should be referred by the Clerk of Governors (contacted through the school office) to the Governing Body. The Governing body will then decide whether to convene a Sub-Committee of the Governing Body to investigate the issue.
- The investigation will observe confidentiality, fairness and make quite clear its status and difference from any of the more formal procedures that the school operates in relation to for example child protection or disciplinary issues. Where necessary the investigation will be undertaken by an independent person.
- The complaint will be acknowledged in writing as expeditiously as possible, the letter explaining who is dealing with the complaint
- If the complaint goes to the Governing Body then this will be acknowledged, in writing, as expeditiously as possible

- Consideration will be given to the sources of advice and information that may need to be gathered in order for the investigation to proceed. A judgement will be made as to whether a meeting with the complainant would be useful on receipt of the complaint.
- If it is not possible to provide a full reply, a holding reply will be made, the complainant will kept informed. Every effort will be made to complete the investigation and response to the complainant within four weeks.
- The final outcome of the investigation and the decisions taken will be generally conveyed to the complainant orally and then confirmed in writing.
- The complainant may appeal the outcome of the Governing Body Sub-Committee.
- The Governing Body Appeals Sub-Committee is the last stage of the schools complaints procedure.
- The school will follow the guidance in 'Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016' with regard to serial and persistent complaints.

This complaints procedure is in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act and the school's SEN and Race Equality Policies.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Governing Body will monitor the operation and outcomes of the performance management arrangements.

Annually the Headteacher will provide the Governing Body with a written report on the operation of this policy. The report will ensure that individuals cannot be identified and will include

- The operation of this policy
- The effectiveness of performance management procedures
- Reference to any individual or collective appeals/representations
- Reviewees' training and development needs and instances when it was not possible to provide agreed support

EQUALITY, SAFEGUARDING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

St Nicholas School, in all policies and procedures, will promote equality of opportunity for students and staff from all social, cultural and economic backgrounds and ensure freedom from discrimination on the basis of membership of any group, including gender, sexual orientation, family circumstances, ethnic or national origin, disability (physical or mental), religious or political beliefs.

St Nicholas School aims to:

- Provide equal opportunity for all
- To foster good relations, and create effective partnership with all sections of the community
- To take no action which discriminates unlawfully in service delivery, commissioning and employment
- To provide an environment free from fear and discrimination, where diversity, respect and dignity are valued.

All aspects of Safeguarding will be embedded into the life of the school and be adhered to and be the responsibility of all staff.

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

Code of Conduct Policy Pay Policy, Appraisal Policy Whistleblowing Policy

DANIEL LEWIS REVIEWED TERM 1 2017 RATIFIED BY THE FULL GOVERNING BODY – OCTOBER 2017
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