



St Ignatius' Catholic Primary School



School Complaints Procedure

'An inspired learning community with Jesus Christ at our centre.'

The majority of concerns from parents, carers and others are handled under the following general procedures. The procedure is divided into 3 stages:

Informal stage aims to resolve concerns through informal contact at the appropriate level in school.

Formal Stage 1 is the first formal stage at which written complaints are considered by the Headteacher (or the Chair of Academy Council if the complaint is against the Headteacher), who has responsibility with dealing with the complaint.

Formal Stage 2 is a formal escalation of the complaint to be used once Stage 1 has been fully worked through; this involves a complaints appeal panel of governors.

Informal stage: Initial contact with the school

1. Many concerns can be handled informally once they are made known to us. The first point of contact should be the appropriate class teacher.
2. Once a concern is made known to us, we will see to respond within 3 school days. If it is necessary the class teacher or other appropriate person will complete a monitoring form, noting details and taking responsibility to follow up the matter.
3. Any actions or monitoring of the situation that has been agreed will be clearly communicated and we will normally confirm this in writing or in person with the complainant within 10 school days.
4. If necessary we will contact appropriate people who may be able to assist us with our enquiries the reported concerns.
5. Once we have responded to the concern, the complainant will have the opportunity to ask for the matter to be considered further.
6. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following this informal approach, the concern can become a formal complaint and we will deal with it at the formal stage.

Stage 1: Formal consideration of complaint

If for any reason you are not satisfied with the response and actions taken following an informal approach you have the right to formalise your complaint. This should be approached in a formal written manner.

1. Normally, a written complaint should be addressed to the Headteacher. If, however, the complaint concerns the Headteacher personally, it should be sent to the school marked 'for the attention of the 'Chair of St Ignatius Academy Council.'

2. We will acknowledge your complaint within 3 school days.
3. We will enclose a copy of the procedures with the acknowledgement.
4. The Headteacher may appoint any of the following as the investigating officer
 - a. The Headteacher themselves
 - b. An independent person agreed by the Chair of Academy Council
 - c. A designated member of senior staff who has the responsibility for the investigation into a specific complaint
 - d. A designated member of the Academy Council
5. Normally, we would expect to respond in full within 15 school days. If due to the circumstances of the complaint this is not possible we will write to explain the reason for the delay and to detail when we plan to be able to provide a full response.
6. As part of our consideration of a complaint, we may invite the complainant to a meeting to discuss their concerns and fill in any details required. If the complainant wishes, they can be accompanied by an appropriate person to support them and help explain the reasons for their complaint
7. The Investigating Officer may also be accompanied by a suitable person of they wish.
8. Following the meeting, the Investigating Officer will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, we will talk to the pupils concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question.
9. We will normally talk to pupils with a parent or carer present, unless this would delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint, or where there is a potential safeguarding issue. In such circumstances, we will ensure that another member of staff, with whom the pupil feels comfortable, is present.
10. If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law.
11. The Investigating Officer will keep written/ typed, signed and dated records of all meetings, telephone conversations and other related documentation.
12. The Investigating Officer will establish all the relevant facts, and the Headteacher will send a written response to the complaint. This will give an explanation of the outcomes and the reasons for them. If follow-up action is needed, it will indicate, where appropriate, proposed action. The complainant may be invited to a meeting to discuss outcomes as part of our commitment to building and maintaining ongoing good relations with all our community.
13. We reserve the right not to consider complaints that:
 - a. Are malicious
 - b. Use obscenities, offensive or derogatory language.
 - c. Contain personally offensive remarks about members of our staff
 - d. Are repeatedly submitted with only minor differences after we have fully addressed the complaint
 - e. Have been fully answered in previous correspondence.

14. If the complainant is unhappy with the way in which we reached our conclusions, they may wish to proceed to Stage 2: Consideration by an Academy Council appeal panel.

Stage 2: Consideration by an Academy Council appeal panel

If the complainant has already been through Stage 1 and is not happy with the outcome as a result of the way in which the complaint has been handled, they have the right to take it to an Academy Council appeal panel. This is a formal process and the ultimate recourse at school level.

The purpose of this arrangement is to give the complainant the opportunity chance to present their concerns around the fair conduct of the investigation and the adherence to the correct procedure. This will be done with of a panel of Academy Councillors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the complaint and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice. The panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school.

The panel's role is not to rehear the complaint. It is there to review how the complaint has been investigated and to determine whether this has been conducted fairly. It is there to establish facts and make recommendations which will reassure the complainant that we have taken the complaint seriously.

The Academy Council appeal panel operates according to the following formal procedure:

1. The Academy Council will convene a panel of 3 governors and will aim to arrange for the panel meeting to take place within 20 school days of receiving a written request to review the process. Any request for a review should be lodged with the Chair of Academy Council within 10 school days of receiving the School's written response to an initial complaint.
2. The Headteacher and Investigating Officer will be asked to prepare written reports for the panel, highlighting the process followed as part of the investigations and any recommendations made. The panel can request additional information from other sources if necessary.
3. The complainant will be informed in writing at least 5 school days in advance of the date, time and place of the meeting. We hope that the complainant will feel comfortable with the meeting taking place in school but we will do what we can to make alternative arrangements if preferred.
4. With the written notification of the meeting time the complainant will also receive copies any relevant correspondence or reports regarding Stage 1 and be asked whether they wish to submit further written evidence to the panel. If they wish to do

so they must provide these will sufficient time for the panel to review these in advance of the arranged meeting.

5. The written notification will explain what will happen at the panel meeting and that the complainant is entitled to be accompanied to the meeting but an appropriate individual. The choice of accompanying person is the complaints own, however they are encouraged to involve someone in whom they have confidence but who is not directly connected with the school. The accompanying person's role is to support the complainant, to witness the proceedings and to speak on the complainants behalf if they so wish. Their role is not to provide supplementary evidence or to act in a legal capacity.
6. If it is necessary in the interests of the ratifying of the investigative process, the Headteacher may, with the agreement of the Chair of the panel, invite any relevant witnesses directly involved in the matters raised by the complainant to attend the meeting.
7. The Chair of the panel will acknowledge that the formal nature of the meeting may be intimidating for the complainant and other attendees and will do their best to put the meeting at your ease.
8. No evidence or witness previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by the complainant or the school. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to new evidence.
9. The Chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is correctly clerked and minutes taken.
10. The written outcome of the panel meeting which will be sent to the complainant, containing all the discussed information. The complainant may also request a copy of the minutes, but should be aware that due to their confidential nature, some areas or parties' names may be redacted from the copy that they receive.
11. During the meeting the complainant can expect there to be opportunities for:
 - a. The panel to hear you explain your concerns and the case for why it should be heard at Stage 2
 - b. The panel to hear the school's case in response
 - c. The opportunity to raise questions via the chair
 - d. To be asked specific questions by the Headteacher thorough the chair
 - e. The panel members to ask specific questions of the complainant and the Headteacher
 - f. The complainant and the Headteacher to make a final statements
12. In closing the meeting, the Chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that the written notice of the decision will be sent to the complainant and the Headteacher (or the Chair of the Academy Council if the complaint is against the Headteacher) within 3 school days. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.

13. The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:
- a. Reach a unanimous or at least a majority decision on the case
 - b. Decide on the appropriate action to be taken, if necessary; and
 - c. Recommend, where appropriate, to the Academy Council that changes to the school's systems or procedures are made to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.
 - d. The clerk will send the complainant and the Headteacher (or the Chair of Academy Council of the complaint is against the Headteacher) a letter outlining the decision of the panel. The letter will also explain that the complainant is entitled to have the handling of the complaint reviewed by the Secretary of State for Education.
 - e. The school will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the school's records but separate from pupils' personal records.

Closure of Complaints

Very occasionally, the school may feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a complaint where the complainant remains dissatisfied. We will do all we can to help resolve a complaint against the school but sometimes it is simply not possible or appropriate to address all the complainant's wishes. If a complainant persists in making representations to the school – to the Headteacher, Chair of Academy Council or associated person it can be extremely time-consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in our care. For this reason, we are entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint and that the complaint has exhausted our official process.

Where a complainant has been through the school's internal complaints procedure and still has concerns about the outcome or decisions taken by the Academy Council panel they can write to the Secretary of State for Education at: The Department for Education (DfE), 2 St. Paul's Place, 125 Norfolk Street, Sheffield, S1 2FJ enclosing a copy of the complaint outcome.

We would like to advise complainants that unless the school is shown to have behaved unreasonably or not to have followed its own procedures, there is unlikely to be little further action that can be taken, as the Academy Councils are empowered to deal with many issues without reference to either the Local Authority or the Secretary of State.