

St George's Catholic School



Complaints Policy

Policy & Practice

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**Approved by the Governing Body of St George's
Catholic School**

Chair of Governors: _____

Date: _____

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- Three Way Agreement

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Introduction

Since 2003 Governing Bodies of all maintained schools in England have been required, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, to have in place a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. This does not limit complainants to parents or carers of pupils registered at a school. A complainant could be a member of the wider community or someone representing an ex-pupil. The law also requires the procedure to be publicised.

Most issues raised by parents, the community or pupils, are concerns rather than complaints.

At St George's Catholic School, we all work very hard to build positive relationships with all our parents and carers, pupils, and members of our wider community. Our aim is to deal with issues and problems before they become a 'complaint'. However, there is a clear protocol to follow if necessary and the steps to follow and their outcome are outlined in this document.

St George's Catholic School is committed to taking all concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure.

If a complaint is made our prime aim is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial, and confidential manner.

If any parent or carer is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately. There is no doubt that if a concern is shared with the class teacher, they can either reassure worried parents or together devise steps to take to address the concern. Parents must never worry about sharing their concerns with the class teacher. They will always be taken seriously, and due consideration given to a mutually agreeable resolution.

St George's Catholic School staff promise to always be fair, open, and honest when dealing with any concern and to deal with it as swiftly as possible. Our focus will always be on the child and what is best for them.

The school will not investigate an anonymous complaint unless there are exceptional circumstances serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, and where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to St George's Catholic School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

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 defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint's procedure. St George's Catholic School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, Mrs E McDonnell our Headteacher, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, Mrs McDonnell will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, St George's Catholic School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint's procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant if they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering formal complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Concerns or complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mrs E McDonnell, Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Concerns or complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to Mrs H Mac Connell (the Chair of Governors), c/o Mrs S Gordge the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Concerns or complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to Mrs S Gordge (the Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Stage 1 – Concern heard by Staff Member

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. In the first instance, the matter should be discussed with the child's class teacher. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way with apologies where necessary.

The Headteacher or members of the school's senior leadership may be involved at this stage because on some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. In our experience most matters of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way.

If you are not satisfied with the result at stage 1, please write to or call the school within 10 school working days. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Stage 2 – Complaint heard by the Headteacher

Complaints rarely reach this formal level, but should you need to make a formal complaint to the Headteacher then the complaint should be written and received within 10 school working days of you receiving feedback in stage 1; it is suggested that you use a school complaint form (Appendix II) which is available in the reception area of the school. Your form or letter should be addressed to the Headteacher and marked “private and confidential”. The letter should say why you remain unhappy and what you wish to see happen.

The Headteacher will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it and will let you know when your complaint is to be considered. If a meeting with you and others involved is considered necessary, you will be given adequate notice to prepare. You will be informed of the outcome of the Headteacher’s investigation and decision on what further action will be taken within 10 school working days of the complaint being received.

However, if a complaint is more complex to review, this can be extended to a maximum of 20 school working days. The school will provide you with details of the new deadline and an explanation of the delay.

If you are not satisfied with the result at stage 2 please write to or call the school within 10 school working days of getting our response. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher you should move straight to stage 3.

Stage 3 – Complaint heard by the Chair of Governors

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2 or the complaint is about the Headteacher, then you will need to write to the Chair of Governors c/o St George’s Catholic School. The Chair of Governors will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it and a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further.

Following an investigation, the Chair of Governors will aim to provide a written response within 10 school working days of the complaint being received.

However, if a complaint is more complex to review, this can be extended to a maximum of 20 school working days. The school will provide you with details of the new deadline and an explanation of the delay.

If you are dissatisfied with the result at stage 3, you will need to let the school know within 10 school working days of getting the response. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Stage 4 – Complaint heard by the Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 3, then you will need to write to the Clerk of Governors giving details of the complaint and asking that it is put before the appeal panel.

Should the Chair of Governors have been involved at any previous stage in the process, a nominated Governor, impartial to the complaint, will convene a complaints panel. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it. The hearing will normally take place within 20 school working days of sending the acknowledgment.

The aim of the Appeal panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. All parties will be notified of the Panel's decision in writing within 5 school working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further.

The Governors appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process.

Further representation

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by St George's Catholic School. They will consider whether St George's Catholic School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Investigating complaints

The person investigating the complaint will:

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- Meet with the complainant or contact them if further information is required
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- Conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Complete all necessary notes

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the complaint St George's Catholic School and the complainant will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better - An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence.
- Assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur.
- Explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint will not be shared
- An undertaking to review school policy or procedure considering the complaint.
- An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld
- An explanation that, following investigation, the evidence does not substantiate the concern

Monitoring and review

The Governors will monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The head teacher will log all stage 2 complaints received by the school, and record how they were resolved. These will be reported as part of the Headteacher's report to Governors. The Governors of St George's Catholic School review this policy as necessary.

Complaints not in Scope of this policy

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by St George's Catholic School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions should be raised directly with local authorities (LA).</p> <p>For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the LA). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.</p> <p>Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised directly with (LA)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). <insert LADO/MASH details>.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure. <link to school behaviour policy>.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised directly with Ofsted by telephone on 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to:</p> <p>WBHL, Ofsted, Picadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member because of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to

the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against St George's Catholic School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Appendix II - St George's Catholic School - Complaint Form

This form should only be completed after you have raised your concern with a member of St George's Catholic School staff; this may be your child's teacher or a member of the Senior Leadership team.

Please complete the form and place it in an envelope addressed to the Headteacher, marked "Private and Confidential". The envelope should then be handed into the school office.

Your Name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):

Your address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint:

What action have you already taken to try to resolve your concern?

Who did you speak to and what was your response?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

School use:

Date received:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Complaint referred to:

Appendix I – Three Way Agreement

2023-2024 St George's Catholic School Three Way Agreement

Name:

Class:

At St George's Catholic School we want your child to succeed at school and enjoy their learning. It is important that we all work together and take our responsibilities seriously. Our Three Way Agreement sets out what we expect from one another in a partnership of school staff, children and parents/carers.

Please can you read the agreement below, discuss it with your child and sign it together. This agreement should then be returned to school for your child's class teacher to also sign below.

<u>St George's Catholic School</u>	<u>Parents/Carers</u>	<u>Pupils</u>
<p>The school will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • care for your child's safety and happiness and let you know about any homework tasks or other opportunities for home learning • read and sign the Home/School diary to let you know about any homework tasks or other opportunities for home learning • set the highest standards for work and behaviour and encourage all children to do their best in school activities • review your child's progress regularly, set targets for future learning and inform you about their progress through parent/teacher meetings each term • contact you if there is a concern about attendance or punctuality 	<p>I/We shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure my/our child attends school regularly and as far as possible avoid taking holidays during term time • make sure my/our child arrives on time by 8:50 am and will telephone the school before 9:30 am if he/she is going to be absent • let the school know about any concerns or problems that might affect my child's learning or behaviour • read and sign the Home/School diary and support my child with homework • attend open evening each term and meetings to discuss my/our child's progress • support the school's policies to promote good behaviour and discourage bullying • always dress my/our child in school uniform and in sensible footwear 	<p>I shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • come to the school every day and be on time • be friendly, polite and helpful, and show respect for other people • follow the St George's Catholic School behaviour code and help to stop any bullying • have a positive attitude towards learning and try to do my best in all school activities • care for school equipment and school grounds • work hard at home and school to achieve my targets

