



St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School and Byron Sixth Form College Complaints Procedure

Introduction

St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School and Byron Sixth Form College is a loving, caring catholic school dedicated to providing the best possible education and support for all its pupils in line with gospel values. This means having a clear, fair and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints to or against the school, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.

All school staff will be made aware of complaints procedures and expected to review this policy regularly in order that they are familiar with our process of dealing with complaints and can be of the most assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

This policy explains that procedure, and the steps that it outlines should be referred to and followed by all pupils and their parents whenever an issue arises that causes them concern.

This policy does not apply to complaints about:

- Pupil Exclusions

Each of these follows its own process of complaints and appeals which are outlined in their relevant policies.

If there is an allegation or concern about physical or sexual misconduct towards a child, or there is a belief that a child may be at risk of serious harm, the school may immediately refer the case to child protection and welfare services. If it is decided that there is cause for an official investigation, the decisions by these authorities will supersede those made by the school and outlined in this policy.

For more information on our school's provision for protecting our pupils, read our **child protection and safeguarding policy** which can be accessed on our school website.



1. When an issue or concern first arises

We aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding. If you have a concern that you would like to take up with the school you should initially inform your child's Head of House / Head of Year as they will be best placed to help you either directly or by identifying which other member of staff you should be speaking to. A written explanation of your concern will be taken by the Head of House / Head of Year that you speak to.

You may be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with your concern.

If you are unhappy with the Head of House / Head of Year response this will be escalated to the Senior Leadership Team.

If your concern is about the Headteacher, you should raise your concern in writing with the Chair of Governors.

If your complaint is about a Governor, you should raise your concern in writing with the Clerk to the Governing Body. The Clerk to the Governing Body is Cathryn Henderson and she can be contacted via email at Cathryn.Henderson@southtyneside.gov.uk

The Chair of Governors may refer your complaints that are taken straight to them back to the appropriate member of staff if they do not warrant the governing body's involvement at that point.

1.2 Initial informal meeting

Once a concern has been raised you may be invited to attend an informal meeting with a member of staff or the Headteacher/Chair of Governors to discuss your concerns.

You are welcome to bring a friend, partner or, in the case of a pupil who has raised a concern, a parent to this meeting. It may be appropriate for a pupil to attend the meeting if their parent has raised a concern, depending on the nature of the issue.

Staff have the responsibility to ensure that you understand any future points of action that have been agreed upon in this meeting and should make a record of what has been discussed, as well as any outcomes and a plan action, if one has been agreed.

All staff will do their best to ensure that your concerns are dealt with appropriately and effectively but if you cannot come to an agreement, or are dissatisfied with the outcome of your meeting, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher.

2. Formal Complaints

The member of staff designated as 'complaints co-ordinator' is Frances Cessford and she can be contacted via email at f.cessford@st-bedes.durham.sch.uk All formal complaints will be logged.

In order to ensure that complaints are processed efficiently and effectively, St Bede's Catholic

Comprehensive School and Byron Sixth Form College deals with formal complaints in three stages:

Stage 1

If you do not feel that your concern has been dealt with as you would like, are unhappy with the outcome of your informal meeting or feel that the issue is serious enough that it warrants it, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher.

The complaint will be acknowledged in writing normally within three working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during the holidays.

The Headteacher may invite you in for a meeting to discuss the outcome, possible solutions, or to explain what has or will happen as a result of your complaint.

The Headteacher will keep a record of all interactions with you and other staff, meetings and decisions made in reference to your complaint.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, the Headteacher will talk to that employee. If it is an allegation of abuse, a formal investigation may be instigated by the school or external child welfare authorities to whom the school reports.

The Headteacher will respond to you in writing within fifteen working days outlining their response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If they decide not to take any further action on the issue, they will explain what they have decided, how they have reached this decision, and will outline your right to take the matter further and the steps to be taken.

Stage 2

If, having spoken to the Headteacher, you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint; you may lodge your complaint with the Chair of Governors in writing, explaining your concern and the steps that have lead up to you taking this course of action.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, that employee will be given the opportunity to write a response, which will be sent to the Chair of Governors within five days of the complaint being lodged with them.

The Chair of Governors will respond to you in writing within ten working days outlining their response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If they have decided not to take any further action on the issue, they will explain what they have decided, how they have reached this decision, and will outline your right to appeal and how you can start your appeal.

3. Appeals

Stage 3

If you would like to lodge an appeal following the outcome of a formal complaint at stage 2, this will be taken to the appeals panel of the Governing Body. You should write to the Clerk to the Governing Body to exercise this right. The Clerk to Governors will acknowledge your appeal and make the necessary arrangements, and will usually convene the appeal panel within ten working days from the acknowledgment being sent. Where it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date within that timescale, a further timescale will be agreed with you.

The Clerk will ensure that all parties to the appeal have access to the same documentation and set out a timetable to support the collation and circulation of documents.

The Appeals Panel

The appeals panel will be made up of members of the Governing Body. No member of the Governing Body can sit on the appeals panel if they have had any former knowledge or involvement in the case that is being dealt with at that time. The panel will consist of 3 to 5 Governors and a Chair will be nominated from within that group. All panel members will be familiar with and have access to the complaints policy.

The panel will give careful consideration to how the complainant can be made to feel most comfortable presenting to the panel, especially in the case of a young child having to present or explain information.

Appeals procedure

The procedure for an appeal is as follows:

1. The complainant and Headteacher will enter the hearing together.
2. The Chair will introduce the panel members and outline the process.
3. The complainant will explain the complaint.
4. The Headteacher and panel will question the complainant.
5. The Headteacher will explain the school's actions.
6. The complainant and panel will question the Headteacher.
7. The complainant will sum up their complaint.
8. The Headteacher will sum up the school's actions.
9. The Chair will explain that both parties will hear from the panel within ten working days.
10. Both parties will leave together while the panel decides.
11. The Clerk will stay to assist the panel with its decision making.

The Chair of the panel/Clerk to Governors will notify the complainant of the panel's decision in writing within ten working days of the appeal hearing. The letter will set out the decision of the panel together with the reasons underpinning that decision. The letter may set out recommendations which will be made to the Governing Body and will set out any further rights of appeal.

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The appeals panel may:

- Dismiss all or part of the complaint
- Uphold all or part of the complaint
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Evaluate all the evidence available and recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures as a preventative step against similar problems arising in the future.

The panel's decision is final. If you are unhappy with the outcome, you may wish to put your complaint to the Secretary of State. Complaints should be sent to the School Complaints Unit, DfE, 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Manchester M1 2WD.

4. Vexatious complaints

Whilst it is hoped that this policy will reduce any dissatisfaction with the school, it is acknowledged

that there may be rare occasions where a complainant continues to be dissatisfied with the school and the outcomes achieved under the complaints policy.

Where a complainant attempts to re-open an issue which has already been dealt with under the complaints policy, the Chair of Governors will contact them to inform them that the matter has already been dealt with and that either that stage of the policy has been exhausted or that the complaints policy has been exhausted and the matter is considered closed. Where further correspondence is received on the same matter, this may be considered vexatious and the school will be under no obligation to respond to that correspondence.

5. Governing Body – review and monitoring complaints

St Bede’s Catholic Comprehensive School will review and evaluate all complaints no matter how far they are taken or what the outcome to ensure that similar problems are avoided in the future or to see if they could have managed any more effectively.

The Governing Body will review the complaints policy every year.

6. Staff complaints

Staff who have a concern about a colleague or voluntary member of staff should refer to our **whistle blowing policy**.

The procedure for dealing with any other staff complaints or employment grievances is set out in the school’s **staff discipline and grievance policies**.

Contact details

Complaints Co-ordinator - Mrs Frances Cessford
Acting Headteacher - Mrs Francesca Craik
Chair of Governors - Mr Anthony McCourt
St Bede’s Catholic Comprehensive School, Westway, Peterlee, Co Durham SR8 3NE

Signed by:

_____ **The Chair of Governors** **Date:**

_____ **Headteacher** **Date:**

