

Great Crosby Catholic Primary School
‘...that they may have life and have it to the full.’
John 10;10

Complaints Procedure



Date of issue:

June 2019

Review Date:

June 2020

Great Crosby Catholic Primary School

Complaints Procedure

School Business Manager: Mrs Lynn Mason

Telephone Number: 0151 924 8661

Email address: finance.greatcrosby@schools.sefton.gov.uk

1. General Principles

Great Crosby Catholic Primary School is committed to providing the very highest standards of education and support and places great value on its strong partnership with parents. We recognise that from time to time concerns or complaints may arise and it is our aim to work with all parties involved towards a satisfactory resolution.

Statutory procedures are in place to cover many potential problems and are therefore outside the scope of this procedure

- Matters concerning safeguarding or child protection;
- Staff grievances arising from their employment;
- Admissions appeals;
- School Reorganisation proposals;
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs or disability;
- The exclusion of a pupil from school;
- Complaints raised with an expectation of confidentiality ('whistleblowing');
- Complaints about the curriculum;
- Complaints about the teaching of RE or the Collective Act of Worship;

Further information about these procedures is provided in an annex 1 to this document: Further detail about how to progress any of the above complaints can be found on the school's website or by enquiring at the school office.

The aim of this procedure is to enable those involved to reach a resolution of their concerns by providing a transparent and easily understood process for handling complaints. We will do this by:

- Attempting to resolve concerns through informal discussions at the earliest stage
- Providing named contacts and a timescale for a response to be made by the school
- Focusing on resolving complaints rather than apportioning blame
- Promoting confidentiality and discretion
- Being forthright in dealing with vexatious, abusive and malicious complaints

All complaints, regardless of the subject matter, will first of all, be reviewed by our School Business Manager, to ensure that the appropriate staff in the school are notified. If after reviewing the nature of your complaint it is decided that an alternative statutory procedure applies then we will inform you. Examples of such complaints include those relating to exclusions or admissions.

2. How to report a complaint

Stage 1 - Informal concerns or complaints

Concerns or complaints should initially be discussed informally with the relevant member of staff with a view to resolving the issue. There is no need at this stage for the complaint to be made in writing, however the member of staff will make a note of any agreed actions using the form at Annex 2 and this will be retained as a record.

If the complaint has already been discussed with the member of staff, or that would be inappropriate, a senior manager (this could be the Headteacher or another senior manager) will discuss the complaint again with you with a view to seeking to resolve the matter informally.

We would expect the vast majority of concerns or complaints to be resolved at this early stage.

In the unusual event that your complaint remains unresolved after discussions with the appropriate member of staff then you may put your complaint in writing and this will be handled under Stage 2.

Stage 2 - Formal Complaint Investigation

If your complaint cannot be resolved informally then you will be given the opportunity to put it formally in writing using the form at Annex 3. You will need to send this to the School Business Manager **within 10 school days** of the conclusion of Stage 1.

We will then appoint an appropriate person to investigate your complaint further (The Investigating Officer) who will:

- Acknowledge your complaint **within 5 school days**.
- Investigate the complaint and then decide how best to resolve it within a further **10 school days**.
- Provide a written response to you outlining how the investigation was conducted and the outcome of the complaint, as well as offering you an opportunity to discuss the outcome if appropriate. This will normally be **within 5 school days** of completing the investigation.
- Advise you on the next steps if after this review your complaint has not been resolved which will be covered under Stage 3.

Stage 3 - Formal Complaint Panel

If your complaint has not been resolved at Stage 2 then you may write **within 10 school days** of the notification of the Stage 2 outcome to the Complaints Co-ordinator at school, requesting a Formal Complaints Panel and explaining why you feel that your complaint has not been fully addressed at Stage 2. You should do this using the reporting form at Annex 4.

We will acknowledge your request **within 5 school days** and inform you of the arrangements for the Formal Complaint Panel. The Panel will be made up members of the Governing Board.

A meeting of the Panel will be convened normally **within 20 school days** of your request.

The Panel will consider the following:

- any appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- whether to dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- whether to uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- whether changes to the school procedures in the future may be necessary.

The Panel will take into account whether the complaint has been handled properly and reasonably in accordance with this procedure and whether the Stage 2 outcome was reasonable and appropriate.

You will normally be informed of the outcome at the end of the Formal Panel and this will be confirmed in writing **within 7 school days**. The decision of the Panel is final.

3. Taking your complaint further

Although the decision of the Panel is final under this procedure if you consider that the school or its representatives is proposing to act unreasonably, or has failed to carry out its statutory duties then you may write to the Secretary of State for Education.

4. Expectations under this procedure

When you bring a complaint to us under this procedure you may expect the school to:

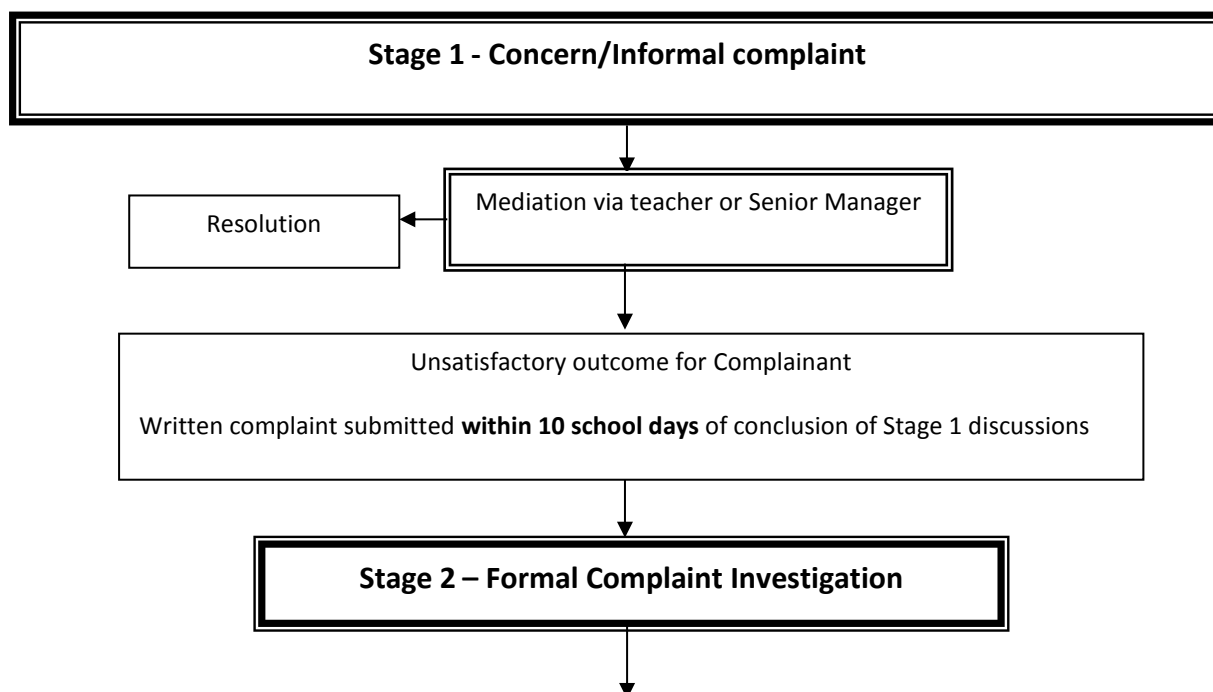
- Take your complaint seriously
- Treat you with courtesy and respect
- Deal with it with discretion and confidentiality (if the matter relates to the safety and well-being of a child then we reserve the right to share details with other agencies)
- Offer you the opportunity to be accompanied by a friend, adviser or colleague
- Meet the timescales set unless there is good reasons to extend these – in which case you will be informed
- Seek and offer resolution at all stages
- Inform you of the action taken to resolve your complaint and of any measures to ensure that a similar complaint does not arise in the future

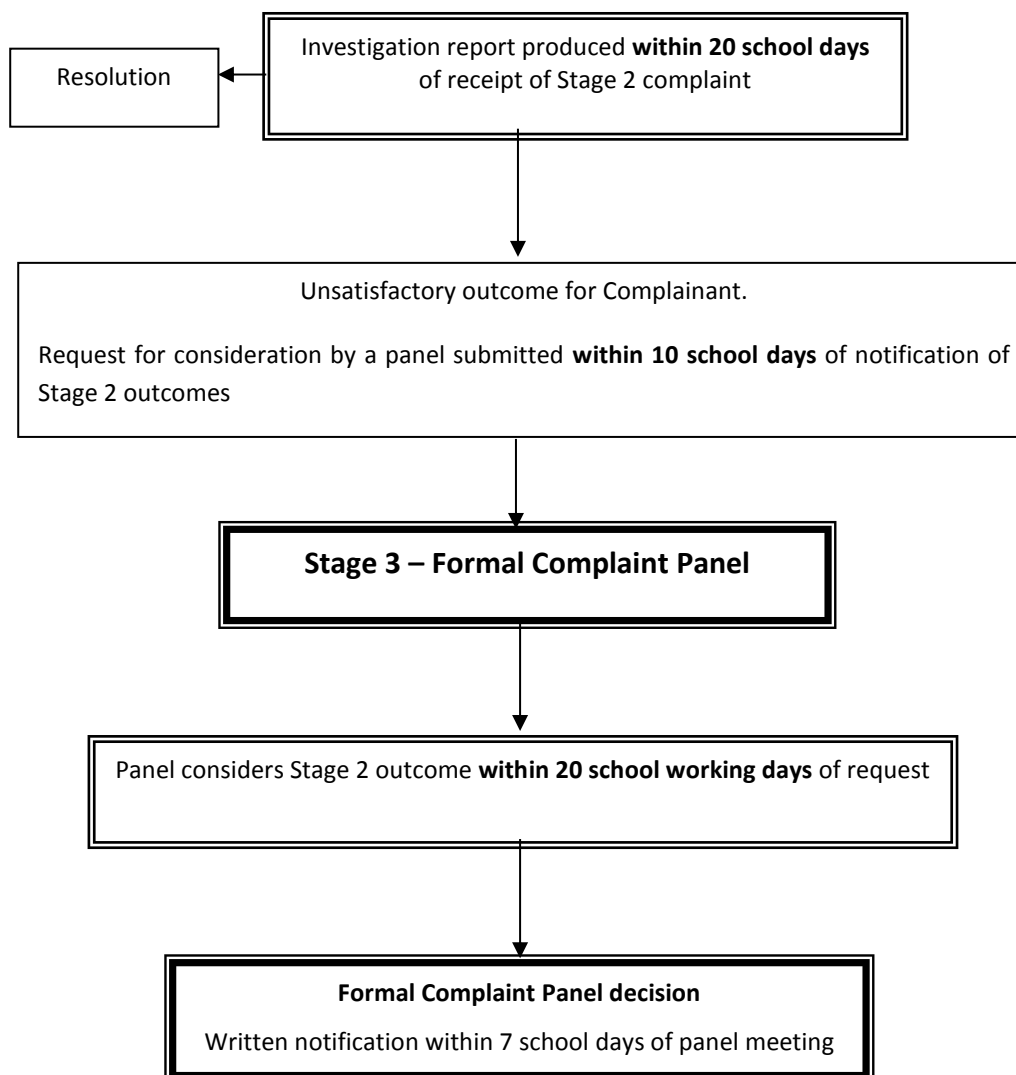
In turn we expect that:

- Our staff will be treated with respect
- You will be mindful of the need to keep information relating to children confidential in the interests of all our students
- That you will enter into the procedure in the spirit of seeking resolution
- If we consider that disciplinary action may be necessary against our staff then we will deal with this under our disciplinary procedure and in confidence.

In the unlikely event that anyone bringing a complaint is considered by the Headteacher to be acting unreasonably or that the complaint is malicious or vexatious then the Headteacher will intervene and appropriate restrictions may be imposed. See annex 5

GENERAL COMPLAINTS PROCESS





Complaints Procedure: Management of stages within a Voluntary Aided School

Complaint relates to	Stage 1: Informal	Stage 2: Formal Complaint Investigation Investigating Officer	Stage 3: Formal Complaint Panel
Pupils, parents or staff (other than the Headteacher)	The appropriate member of staff	The Headteacher or other Senior Manager	Panel appointed by the Chair of Governors.
The Headteacher	The Headteacher	The Chair of Governors or another nominated non-staff Governor	Panel appointed by the Vice Chair of Governors.
A Governor or Governors (other than the Chair of Governors)	The Chair of Governors	Another nominated non-staff Governor	Panel appointed by the Vice Chair of Governors.
The Chair of Governors (or a group of Governors including the Chair of Governors)	The Vice Chair of Governors	Another nominated non-staff Governor	Panel appointed by the Vice Chair of Governors.
The whole Governing Board		A person appointed by the Archdiocesan Education Service	A panel appointed by the Archdiocesan Education Service.

Note: Governors will not be part of any Stage 3 panel if involved in any of the previous management stages.

Annex 1

OTHER RELEVANT PROCEDURES.

This annex provides an outline only. Further detail is available on the school's website or by enquiring at the office.

Safeguarding and Child Protection.

Each school has a policy to ensure that, where pupils are at risk of harm, the appropriate authorities are notified and given the opportunity to take action. This policy is published on the website and includes the names and contact details of the relevant people.

The ultimate responsibility for safeguarding rests with the Local Authority; each LA has a Designated Officer for safeguarding known as the LADO. This officer will triage complaints and may involve the police, social care or the school as appropriate. The school may refer complaints which may have a safeguarding element to the appropriate authorities before carrying out any internal investigations. This is not to be considered a breach of confidentiality.

Admission and Exclusion Appeals.

Where an application for a place at the school is refused, or a pupil is excluded from school, there are separate statutory procedures covering the arrangements for appeal.

Religious Education and Collective Worship.

In a Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Liverpool, complaints that the school is not delivering an appropriate RE curriculum or conducting collective acts of worship in accordance with the requirements of the Catholic Church should be referred to the diocese:

**Department of Education
LACE
Croxteth Drive
Liverpool L17 1AA**

The Curriculum

Complaints that the school is not delivering an appropriate curriculum should be addressed to

**The School Complaints Unit
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street,
Manchester M1 2WD**

Complaints from Staff arising from their conditions of employment

**Great Crosby Catholic Primary School
Complaints Procedure: Version 2019/1
Date: 11.03.19**

These must be dealt with under the CES Grievance Procedures.

Whistleblowing.

A complainant who does not wish to be identified must write to the Chair of Governors setting out details of the complaint.

The Chair must decide how to proceed without disclosing the identity of the whistleblower. The matter may need to be referred elsewhere, such as to the LADO or the police. The action taken will depend on the nature of the complaint and on the existence or possible existence of additional corroborative evidence.

Anonymous complaints will not be ignored, but the complainant must understand that the investigation may be hampered if possible evidence cannot be tested.

School Reorganisation Proposals.

Any complaint against a proposal to close, merge, enlarge or reduce the size of a school will be dealt with under a separate procedure managed by the Local Authority.

Special Education Needs and Disability. (SEND)

Separate arrangements exist for handling complaints about assessment of SEND, provision and placement.

Annex 2

Stage 1 - Initial Record of concern/complaint

School	
Name of Complainant	
Name of Child	
Date of Contact with School	
Nature of concern	
Actions Taken	
Signature	Date

**Annex 3
Stage 2 - Complainant Form**

Please complete and return to the School Business Manager who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the pupil:
Address:
Postcode:
Telephone number:
Email:
Please give details of your complaint
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the 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:

Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Annex 4

Stage 3 - Complainant Form

Please complete and return to the School Business Manager who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the pupil:
Address: Postcode: Telephone number: Email:
Please confirm that you are requesting that your complaint be taken to a governors' panel.
Please provide details of why you were dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature: Date:
<u>Official use</u> Date acknowledgement sent: By who: Complaint referred to: Date:

Annex 5

Managing Unreasonable and Serial Complaints.

Great Crosby is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. The school will not normally limit the contact complainants may require.

The school will not, however, tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will act to protect staff from that behaviour, especially behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders the proper consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school.

For example, if the complainant

- refuses to articulate the complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivia, repetitive or irrelevant information which s/he expects to be considered;
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered in an unreasonable timescale;
- makes complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues for which there is no evidence;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic or disproportionate outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being considered;
- uses threats to intimidate staff or other parties involved;
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
- knowingly provides falsified information;
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before deciding that the complaint is unreasonable.

If the unreasonable behaviour continues, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable, giving reasons and ask them to modify it. Where complainants seek to make an excessive number of contacts with the school and thereby cause a significant level of disruption, the methods of communication may be prescribed and the number of contacts limited in a communication plan. This will be reviewed regularly.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the school will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school.

