

**SIR JOHN CASS'S FOUNDATION**  
**AND RED COAT COFE**  
**SECONDARY SCHOOL & SIXTH**  
**FORM COLLEGE**



**Complaints Procedure**

Ratified by Governors: Feb 2015

To be reviewed: Feb 2018

Chair of Governors: Rev T. Critchlow

SLT Responsible: Headteacher

# School Complaints Policy

## Introduction

From time to time parents, and others connected with the school, will become aware of matters that cause them concern. To encourage the resolution of such situations the Governing Body has adopted a complaints procedure. Parents, staff and governors will be encouraged to play an active role in drafting and regularly reviewing policy and procedure for complaints to ensure that parents, staff and governors, have a policy and procedure which is understandable by all. The procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- be non adversarial;
- simple and easy to use;
- address all points that are at issue;
- allow problems to be handled swiftly and confidentially;
- inform future practice so that the problem does not happen again;
- reaffirm the partnership between parents, staff and governors so that they work together for the good of the school;
- usually possible to resolve complaints by informal means.

## Informal and Formal complaints

The families of all new entrants to the school are provided with guidance on the complaints procedure (see Appendix A Expressing a Concern – Notes for Parents).

At the first **informal** stage parents or other complainants are encouraged to contact the Headteacher's Personal Assistant. On these occasions the Headteacher will seek to ensure that the concern is resolved informally between the complainant and relevant members of the teaching staff. While still at the informal stage a meeting between the complainant and the Headteacher may be necessary to resolve matters to the satisfaction of all parties.

In the instances when it is not possible to resolve a concern according to the complainant's satisfaction by informal means, he or she has the option of taking the complaint to **the formal stage**. This begins with a written communication to the Headteacher detailing the concerns and allegations. The following stages of the formal procedure, in accordance with the school's Voluntary Aided status, can involve the Chair of Governors and then the Complaints Committee of the Governing body.

The school is committed to resolving all complaints promptly, effectively and professionally at both the informal and formal stage of the procedure according to an agreed time scale. The following principles are to be followed in every instance:

- complainants are kept informed of progress at each stage of the procedure;
- the main aim at all stages is to secure either that the complaint is settled or that the decision is taken to proceed to the next stage of the procedure;
- at each stage of the procedure full written records are kept for the guidance of those who might need to consider the complaint at a later stage;
- interviews with staff which are carried out as a part of the formal complaints procedure must be conducted on the understanding that staff have the right, if they so wish, to be accompanied by an association representative or friend.

## Summary of Procedures and Timescales

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	Recommended number of school days <sup>(a)</sup> after receipt of complaint
<b>Informal</b>		
1	Parent(s) contact the Headteacher's PA. Meeting with relevant member of the teaching staff to attempt to resolve the matter informally.	As soon as possible
2	If parents remain unsatisfied a meeting can be arranged between the Headteacher or designated member of senior staff with parent/s. Complainant (s) provided with timescale of response deadline.	10 days
<b>Formal</b>		
1	Acknowledgement by the Headteacher of receipt of a written complaint. Complainant provided with timescale of response deadlines for all stages of the formal procedures.	Within 3 days <sup>(b)</sup>
2	Investigation by Headteacher or designated member of staff, which would normally include a meeting with the parent/s or complainant(s).	Within 7 days or at a mutually agreed time
3	Headteacher or designated member of staff sends written notification of the outcome of the investigation to the parents. The parents are told that if they are not satisfied they may send a written complaint to the Chair of the governing body. The Headteacher may wish to refer the matter to the Chair of the governing body.	Normally within 10 days
4	Chair of the governing body, or a designated governor, acknowledges receipt of a written complaint, saying the matter will be investigated and indicating timings. The complaint is investigated.	Within 3 days Normally within 10 days
5	Chair of the governing body sends a summary of findings and a decision to the parents. The parents are told that if they are not satisfied that they may ask the matter to be referred to the governors' Complaints Committee.	Within 5 days of receipt of chair's letter
6	Governors' Complaints Committee considers the complaint. Complaint and Head's report of investigation sent to all taking part 5 days before the meeting.	Within 15 days of the referral in 3 above
7	Decision of governors' Complaints Committee notified to parent(s) or complainant(s).	Within 2 days of meeting

(a) School days are when the pupils are attending; staff INSET days are excluded.

(b) Counting begins on the school day after receipt.

If the Headteacher is the subject of a complaint, the Chair of the Governing Body or a

nominated governor would undertake an investigation.

The timescales indicated are for guidance only. Particular circumstances may indicate longer or shorter times depending upon information being made available by parents and others, and the results of investigations. The Chair of the governing body, together with the Chair of the Governing Body's Complaints Committee, should be permitted to vary timescales when they consider it appropriate to do so and communicate this to parents.

### **Investigating Complaints**

The Investigating Officer (the Headteacher or designated member of the senior team) will follow the process recommended by the DCSF ie:

- 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 or clarification is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct any interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of any interview for record.

### **Resolving Complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, efforts will be made 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 explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

It may also be the case however that the allegation made by the complaint may not have any substance and it is therefore considered to be unfounded or unsubstantiated.

### **A further note**

There may be more general matters causing a degree of unease in the community that may be best handled through discussion at a Governing Body meeting. Such matters should be put on the agenda, with the consent of the Chair of the Governing Body, and not raised under Any Other Business. Governors will exercise some caution in dealing with such matters in case they result in disciplinary or grievance proceedings. Governors who are members of hearings committees need to 'distance' themselves from complaints in order to demonstrate their impartiality at any subsequent hearing.

## EXPRESSING A CONCERN :: NOTES FOR PARENTS

### **If you have a concern**

We would like you to tell us about it so that we can talk with you and see how best to remove your concern. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in the school.

Whatever your concern, please know that we shall treat it as being strictly confidential.

Be assured that, no matter what you wish to share with us, our support and respect for you and your child in the school will not be affected in any way.

Please do not delay telling us of your concern. It is difficult for us to properly investigate an incident or problem that is more than a day or two old.

After hearing your concern we shall act as quickly as we can. Please allow time for any action we may take to be effective. At all stages of our complaints procedure we will advise you of the deadlines for our response to your concerns.

### **What to do first**

Contact the Headteacher's Personal Assistant. A time will be arranged for you to meet with a relevant member of staff. This meeting will be arranged as soon as possible so that you can sit and talk things through. You may wish to make a further appointment with the Headteacher.

### **What to do next**

If you are still unhappy, you may formally write to the Headteacher, detailing your concerns. This will lead to a full investigation following DfES guidelines. You may have to wait a short time while investigations are carried out in line with our published timescales – see the attached sheet.

Every effort will be made to resolve the situation and the Headteacher will send you a full written response.

### **If you are still unhappy**

The problem will normally be solved by this stage. However, if you are still not satisfied you may wish to write to the Chair of the Governing Body.

The Chair of the Governing Body will probably discuss the matter with the Headteacher and may arrange for a further investigation. S/he will then write to you to say what s/he has decided to do in response to your complaint.

### **Further action**

The Chair of the Governing Body, or you, may ask for your complaint to be heard by the Complaints Committee of the Governing Body.

The Complaints Committee would listen to you, to the Headteacher and others involved and come to a decision.

## A summary of the stages in the Complaints Procedure for Sir John Cass's Foundation and Red Coat School

Only in very exceptional circumstances would it be appropriate to miss out any of the stages described below.

### **Stage 1 :: INFORMAL**

- Discussion of concerns with relevant member of staff as soon as possible.
- If unsatisfied parents may ask to discuss concerns with Headteacher. Timescale 10 days

**If still unsatisfied parents may make a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher.**



### **Stage 2 :: FORMAL**

- On receipt of a formal complaint the Headteacher or designated member of staff investigates. Headteacher acknowledges written complaint within 3 days and provides complainants with Summary of Procedures and Timescales for the next three stages of procedure.
- Headteacher notifies outcome of investigation to parents in writing, saying that if they are not satisfied, they may send a written complaint to the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Chair of the Governing Body, or a designated governor, investigates.
- Chair sends written summary of findings to parents together with his/her decision.
- if the parents are not happy with the Chair's decision they may ask for the matter to be referred to the Governing Body's Complaints Committee.
- Following a referral by the Chair of Governors the Complaints Committee considers the complaint and reaches a decision; the parents are informed of the decision.