

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

### **St Thomas More's Catholic Primary School**

#### **RATIONALE**

The education of the pupils at St Thomas More's Catholic Primary School is strengthened by good partnership between the school and home. This partnership is essential to the fulfilment of the Mission Statement **'to educate and inspire every child to fulfil their unique giftedness within a loving Catholic environment'**.

Where there are concerns it will always be our intention to seek a resolution. This will always be carried out in the true spirit of reconciliation.

It is hoped that all concerns can be dealt with informally. However, where this is not possible, formal procedures will be adopted.

See also:

- Complaints against the Curriculum Policy
- Staff Discipline and Grievance Policy
- Child Protection Policy

#### **AIMS**

- To resolve concerns through informal discussions at the earliest stage
- To resolve issues as quickly as possible within a given timescale
- To focus on resolution
- To promote confidentiality and discretion
- To be accessible to all parents

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- This will be achieved through a staged process of meetings

#### **MONITORING THE POLICY**

In order to monitor the process the Headteacher will record any complaints and action taken in a book.

Similarly Governors will also record any complaints.

These will be brought to the Admissions and Pastoral committee each term for discussion and evaluation.

Reviewed by Curriculum, Admissions and Pastoral Committee: 8/5/17

To be reviewed bi-annually

Next review: Autumn 2018

## **GUIDELINES**

### **THE PROCESS – A STAGED APPROACH**

#### **INFORMAL**

1. It is natural that, initially, parents will want to discuss any concerns they may have, with their child's class teacher. This usually enables problems to be sorted out quickly to everyone's satisfaction. Teachers have surgery times each week when they can meet with parents.

#### **At class teacher level:**

- Record and date any concerns raised informally if they are not satisfactorily resolved by the first informal discussion
- Invite the parent to discuss the matter again if necessary
- If further discussion will not resolve the concern, follow 2 in the policy – invite the parent to bring the concern to the attention of the Headteacher

2. Unresolved concerns should then be brought to the attention of the Headteacher, preferably in person.

#### **At Headteacher level:**

- Invite the parents to discuss the matter face-to-face, if possible
- Give the parents the complaints policy, if necessary, at an appropriate time
  - Show them where they are currently in the process
  - Encourage them to follow the complaints procedure and not go outside the school
- Headteacher to record any complaints not resolved in a book, so that any recurring complaint can be referred to the Admissions and Pastoral committee for discussion and action.

3. If the concern is not resolved at this stage, the complainant may wish to contact the Chair of the Governing Body.

**At Chair of Governors** (or governor appointee) level – if involved at the informal stage:

- Choose whether to appoint another governor to handle the complaint
- Invite the parents to an informal meeting if possible

4. Informal discussions between the Headteacher and Chair of Governors may achieve conciliation thus preventing any further escalation of the disagreement

#### **FORMAL**

##### **STAGE 1 – HEADTEACHER**

- i) Parents to write to the Headteacher giving details of the concern and enclosing any appropriate paperwork.
- ii) Headteacher to respond to the Parent in writing as soon as possible to acknowledge the complaint and offer a full response within 5 (five) school working days.

Having received the response the parent has 5 school working days to respond or it will be deemed to be completed.

- iii) If the complaint requires an in-depth investigation, the Headteacher will acknowledge this and let the complainant know that a full response will take longer than usual – this will be completed within 10 (ten) school working days. Having received the response the parent has 5 school working days to respond or it will be deemed to be completed.
- iv) The main points of any meeting between Parents and Headteacher will be summarised in a follow-up letter to ensure that all parties have a clear record of progress and agreements.
- v) If after the above, the parent remains dissatisfied then the complaints process moves to Stage 2.

## **STAGE 2 – CHAIR OF GOVERNORS**

- i) Parents should write to the Clerk to the Governors at the school address outlining the complaint, explaining the reasons for pursuing it beyond the Headteacher's response and enclosing any relevant paperwork.
- ii) The clerk to the Governors to respond to the Parent in writing as soon as possible to acknowledge the complaint and offer a full response within 5 (five) school working days.
- iii) If the complaint requires an in-depth investigation, the Chair of Governors will acknowledge this and let the complainant know that a full response will take longer than usual – this will be completed within 21 (twenty one) school working days.
- iv) Chair of Governors will need to decide who is responsible for dealing with the issues involved and therefore what powers are available to the Governing Body.
  - a) Delegated to the Headteacher by the Governing Body
  - b) Fall within the Governing Body remit only
  - c) Are within the Headteacher's Terms and Conditions of Employment and relate to the internal organisation, management and control of the school.
- v) The Chair of Governors;
  - a) May look at the whole issue afresh
  - b) If the matter relates to the Headteacher's conduct the Chair will apply the Staff Disciplinary Procedure
  - c) If the matter is the Headteacher's responsibility then the Chair can only look at whether the Headteacher acted reasonably in the light of the information available at the time.

### **After the written response has been made:**

- vii) The Chair of Governors should offer to go through the response with the parents on a face-to-face basis, where appropriate
- viii) If the Parent remains unhappy with the outcome then the Chair of Governors may offer a Right of Appeal to the Governing Body Complaints Panel.

### **STAGE 3 – GOVERNING BODY COMPLAINTS PANEL**

- i) The Appeal would be made in writing to the Clerk of the Governors detailing what has happened to date and why they are unhappy with the outcome.
- ii) The Parent can either reconsider the complaint or review the complaint.
- iii) The Panel will consist of 3 (three) Governors with no prior involvement in the matter.
- iv) The Panel will meet with the complainant and a representative/s from school to listen to both parties and seek any further clarification about the issues
- v) The panel will discuss the complaint after the withdrawal of both parties and then inform the complainant in writing of the decision of the panel.
- vi) This will be within 5(five) school working days. The letter should include:
  - summary of the issues
  - outline of main points of discussion
  - reasons for decision
  - proposed actions or outcomes

This is the final Stage of the School's Complaints Procedure for general complaints. Complaints cannot be revisited after a period of six months has gone by since the procedure has been completed.

If a parent believes that the Headteacher and the Governing Body's actions have been unreasonable, or the correct process has not been adhered to, the only recourse is to the Secretary of State. It may be helpful for parents to seek advice from the Local Authority (LA) at this stage.

### **STAGE 4 – ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY (LA)**

- i) For general complaints about a school, the LA clearly has no remit or powers beyond reminding schools of their legal obligations. Therefore, for individual general complaints which relate to internal school matters and have exhausted the school's own complaints procedure (that is, they have completed Stage 3) there is no right of appeal to the LA as it has no powers to direct the school to change its decision.
- ii) If a complaint cannot be resolved further, Headteachers, Governors and Parents or other complainants, may seek advice from the LA's complaints adviser.

## **SECRETARY OF STATE**

- i) If a Parent wishes to pursue a complaint because they feel a school has acted unreasonably, they can write to the Secretary of State.
- ii) The Secretary of State will contact the Governing Body and the Local Authority (LA) for more detailed information. The Secretary of State has the power to direct the school to revise an action using the same criteria as applied by the Governors.

Reviewed by Curriculum, Admissions and Pastoral Committee: 8/5/17

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Next review: Autumn 2018