



ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

MISSION STATEMENT

I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full - John 10:10

As a Catholic school, God is at the heart of all we do. We believe that each person is made in His image, deserving to be treated with respect and dignity.

Showing respect, love and care for everyone and everything, we aim to develop harmony between pupils, parents, the school and Parish and grow as a Christian community.

We aim to embed the virtues in every child to believe in themselves to be the best that they can be and leave school as well-rounded individuals who care about themselves, others, and the world.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the
Safeguarding and Child Protection & Whistleblowing Policies

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St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School
Lewis Road | Cheltenham | Gloucestershire | GL51 0HZ
Tel: 01242 513339 | Email: admin@st-thomasmore.gloucs.sch.uk
www.st-thomasmore.gloucs.sch.uk

1. Introduction

By establishing and publicising these procedures and in accordance with Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, the Governing Board will review the school's practice in response to any guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State.

Within our procedure we differentiate between a concern and a formal complaint. The following procedures have been put in place to deal with concerns and formal complaints.

2. Which procedure do I need?

Sometimes, when concerns are more specific, there are alternative and more appropriate policies for dealing with them. The following list details specific topics of complaints and the correct policy to refer to. These policies can be accessed on the school website or a copy can be obtained from the school office.

- Pupil Admissions – please see the school's Admissions Policy or contact the Gloucestershire County Council Admissions team, Shire Hall, Gloucester - Tel: 01452 425 407.
- Pupil Exclusions – please contact the Education Performance and Inclusion Team, Shire Hall, Gloucester - Tel: 01452 427 360.
- Staff Grievance, Capability or Disciplinary – these are covered by the school's Capability Policy and Procedure, Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, and Grievance Policy and Procedure.
- Where the complaint concerns a third party used by the school - please complain directly to the third party themselves.
- Anonymous Complaints – please refer to the Whistleblowing Policy.
- Data Protection – please see the school's GDPR and Data Protection Policies.

3. Aims

Our Complaints' Procedure aims to:

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- Be easily accessible and publicised.
- Be simple to understand and use.
- Be impartial.
- Be non-adversarial
- Allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality.

- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.
- Provide information to the school's Senior Leadership Team or Local Governing Committee so that services can be improved.

At each stage in the procedure, we aim to investigate the issues raised fully to ensure so that we can:

- 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 necessary).
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained about, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Keep notes of the interview or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.

At each stage in the procedure we will consider how an issue might be resolved. The complainant will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem. We will aim to identify areas of agreement and clarify any misunderstandings. In resolving issues, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An acknowledgement that the complaint is valid.
- 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.

4. Concerns

In the majority of instances where a concern has been raised (with a member of staff) we aim to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of all parties involved without the need for formal procedures. The concern may be conveyed orally or in writing either as an email or letter.

From parents/ carers or pupils: in the first instance, for example, parents/carers should raise any concern related to their child's well-being with their class teacher, if the concern is related to their learning and progress.

From staff: in the first instance, members of staff should refer a concern to a member of SLT.

From members of the public: concerns from members of the public should be raised with the School Office and will then be directed according to the nature of the concern.

We aim to acknowledge and, where possible, respond to all concerns within two school days. We recognise some concerns will require further investigation and these will be resolved as quickly as possible.

When a concern is addressed to the Head Teacher, they will determine how best to respond and may delegate responsibility for responding to another member of staff.

When concerns are resolved, the outcome is usually confirmed in writing.

5. Complaints

The school defines a complaint as a written statement of dissatisfaction or disquiet, or a concern which has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the person who raised it originally.

When initial attempts to resolve a concern have been unsuccessful and the person raising the issue remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further, formal procedures will need to be invoked. Our complaints' procedure has three stages:

Stage 1 - (informal): Complaint heard by the Head Teacher.

Stage 2 - (formal): Complaint heard by the Chair of Governors.

Stage 3 - (formal): Complaint heard by a Governor Complaint's Appeal Panel.

An unsatisfied complainant can always take the complaint to the next stage.

A complaint that involves a member of staff and the alleged physical or sexual abuse of children will be dealt with through our staff disciplinary procedures.

If the first approach is made to a Governor, the next step should be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. Governors should not act on individual complaints outside the formal procedure, or be involved in the early stages, in case they are required to sit on a panel at a later stage.

If the complaint concerns the Head Teacher, a Senior Leader should refer the complainant to the Chair of Governors.

If the complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, or any individual Governor, it should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governors.

5.1 Stage 1 - Complaint heard by the Head Teacher

All complaints should be addressed to the Head Teacher in writing. A complaint form is available and, for consistency and record keeping, the complainant should be encouraged to complete the form should they choose to pursue a complaint initially made in person, by telephone or by email, although this is not a requirement. The Head Teacher will:

- Meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary).
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Explain the complaints procedure and provide a copy for the complainant.
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- Keep notes of the interview(s).
- Reply to the complainant.
- Send a record of the complaint to the complainant.

In most circumstances this process should take no longer than ten school working days from receipt of the complaint. However, where further investigations are necessary, new limits may be set and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline and an explanation of the delay.

5.2 Stage 2 - Complaint heard by the Chair of Governors

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled or the outcome of the Stage 1 procedure, the issue should be referred to the Chair of Governors who:

- will review the action taken by the Head Teacher and repeat any stage which they feel is appropriate;
- may delegate the task of collating the information to the Clerk to the Governors but not the decision on the action to be taken.

This procedure should be completed within ten school working days of the complaint being referred to the Chair of Governors and they should write to the complainant notifying them of the outcome and the next stage of the complaints' procedure.

The Chair of Governors or the nominated member will:

- Check that the correct procedure has been followed.
- Notify the clerk to arrange a panel if a hearing is requested.

5.3 Stage 3 - Complaint heard by the Governor Complaints Appeal Panel

If the complainant continues to be dissatisfied with the outcome following the previous two stages, they should write to the Chair of Governors giving details of the complaint and the reason why they believe the previous outcome was flawed. The Chair, or nominated Governor, will then convene a Governor Complaints Appeal Panel.

The Governor Complaints Appeal Panel is the final school-based stage of the Complaints Procedure. The Governor Appeal Panel will be made up of three members of the Local Governing Committee in accordance with the Terms of Reference.

Individual complaints will not be heard by the whole Local Governing Committee at any stage, as this will compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The panel will:

- Determine whether the complaint should be dismissed in whole or in part.
- Determine whether the complaint should be upheld in whole or in part.
- Determine whether the appropriate action has been taken in response to the complaint.
- Make any appropriate recommendations regarding complaint handling and any action to be taken in response to the complaint.
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The Clerk to the Governors will:

- Set the date, time and venue for a hearing, ensuring the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing.
- Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the meeting.
- Record the proceedings.
- Notify all parties of the panel's decision.
- Share copies of the panel meeting minutes with all parties involved in the panel hearing and provide a reasonable opportunity for the minutes to be agreed and if necessary challenged.

The Chair of the Governors Complaints' Appeal Panel will ensure:

- The remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption.
- The issues are addressed.
- Key findings of fact are made.
- Parents/carers and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease.
- The hearing is conducted in a professional manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy.
- The panel is open minded and acting independently.
- No member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.
- Each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions.
- Written material is seen by all parties.
- If a new issue arises, all parties are given the opportunity and time to consider and comment on it.

This stage of the procedure will take longer than the previous stages because of the need to convene a panel. We will aim to complete the procedure from receipt of the complaint to notification of result as quickly as possible. We will try to complete it within a maximum of four school working weeks.

5.4 Unresolved complaints

We will make our best endeavours to resolve a complaint. However, we recognise that there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. The complainant can refer to the Secretary of State for Education. Complainants wishing to take their complaint to this stage should write to The School Complaints Unit (SCU) at Department for Education, 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Manchester, M1 2WD.

The School Complaints Unit will examine if the school's complaints procedure and other policies were followed in accordance with the provisions set out and check if they adhere to education legislation. However, the School Complaints Unit will not investigate the substance of the complaint.

If the complaint becomes protracted and the complainant remains dissatisfied and tries to re-open the same issue with the school, the Chair of Governors will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant writes again on the same issue, the correspondence may be recognised as vexatious and there will be no obligation on the part of the school to respond. If the complaint raises an entirely new, separate complaint, it will be treated in accordance with our complaints' procedure as such.

5.5 Monitoring and evaluation

The Head Teacher will record the number of formal complaints, monitor procedures and produce reports for the Local Governing Committee. Complaints information shared with the Local Governing Committee will not name individuals in case an Appeals Panel is required.

The Local Governing Committee will review the School Complaints Procedure annually. The Local Governing Committee will take account of any new guidance or legislative changes introduced by the Department of Education.

The Local Governing Committee will review the outcomes on a regular basis to:

- Evaluate the school's performance and the effectiveness of dealing with any complaints.
- Ensure the effectiveness of the Complaints Procedure; identify underlying issues that need to be addressed.
- Make changes where necessary.

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School Formal Complaint Form



Name	
Name of pupil, year group and your relationship to them (where applicable)	
Contact address	
Contact telephone (daytime)	
Contact telephone (mobile)	
Contact email address	
Details of the complaint:	
Action taken so far (including the staff member who has dealt with it so far) or solutions offered:	
The reason that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you:	
What action would you like to be taken to resolve the problem?	

Signed:

Date:

Official use Date received:	Signed:
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