

English Martyrs Catholic Voluntary Academy
Complaints Policy / Procedure



“We learn and grow as a family in the footsteps of Jesus”

Introduction

In this school all staff are dedicated to giving all children the best possible education and caring properly for their health, safety and welfare at all times. We are committed to working closely with parents and believe that both must work together in partnership, each carrying out our own particular responsibilities to help children gain the most from their time at school.

If parents are unhappy with any issues they should:

- arrange to discuss any concerns with the class teacher, or with the particular teacher concerned. Most problems can be sorted out this way.
- If, after speaking to the teacher the complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved, the matter should be discussed with the headteacher.
- The next step is a formal written complaint to the headteacher, unless the complaint is about the conduct of the headteacher. A written response will be received within 5 working days. This may be either by email or in letter format.
- If the complaint is about the conduct of the Headteacher, or if parents are dissatisfied with the Headteacher's response to the formal complaint letter, written details of the complaint, along with any correspondence and evidence to support the complaint, should be forwarded to the Clerk to the Governors at the school address. The governors will investigate the complaint and write to advise the parent of the outcome. The decision of the governors is normally final.
- If the complaint is about the school or the governors, the Director of Children's Services at the local authority should be contacted.

Governors' Procedure

All complaints to the Governing Body must be in writing and should include full details of the complaint, and enclosing any supporting evidence. This should be sent to the Clerk to the Governors, care of the school. The Clerk will ensure the complaints process is started as soon as practicable.

- A minimum of three Governors should be selected to form a Complaints Committee to investigate and consider the complaint. Those Governors chosen should ideally have no knowledge whatsoever of the details surrounding the complaint or of the complainant themselves.
- It is appreciated this may not always be possible, however, the Governing Body should always try to find impartial Governors whenever possible.

- Once the Complaints Committee has been formed, they must then decide how they wish to investigate the complaint.
- The Governors have two options available. They can choose to deal with the complaint by means of an oral hearing or through written representations, but in making their decision they must be sensitive to any needs the complainant has. Wherever possible and appropriate, it should be through written representations.
- If the Governors choose to have an oral hearing, the parent will be invited to attend a meeting, where they will be able to put their complaint personally to the Governors. The Headteacher must also be present to respond to the complaint. Teachers should not attend. If their evidence is needed, it should either be obtained via the Headteacher, or where this is not appropriate, by a Governor either before or after the meeting with the parent. The Governors will only make a decision about the complaint once they have heard the parent's and the school's evidence.
- The structure of such a meeting should be flexible. However, it should follow a similar process to exclusion or admission appeals. The complaint is put to the Complaints Committee who will have an opportunity to ask any questions, along with the Headteacher. The complaint should be responded to by the Headteacher with questions from both parties being permitted. Each party will summarise their position. Both parties will leave to allow the Governors to make their decision in private.
- Both the complainant and the Headteacher will be entitled to bring a representative with them if they wish. Either party intending to be accompanied should inform the Clerk to the Governors before the hearing.
- If the Governors do not wish to hold an oral hearing - that decision being at the discretion of the Complaints Committee - the investigation will proceed by way of written representations.
- Should the Governors choose to adopt this procedure, the Clerk to the Governors will write to the complainant, outlining the procedure.
- The complaint will be forwarded to the Headteacher who will have 7 working days to respond.
- That response will be sent to the complainant for comment, any responses to be provided within 7 working days.
- Finally, the complainant's response will be forwarded to the Headteacher who has 7 working days in which to respond to the Clerk.

- A copy of the Headteacher's final response should be sent to the complainant with the advice that it is only for their information and that any further response from the parent will not be considered except in exceptional circumstances.
- All the responses come before the Complaints Committee for consideration.
- All communication should be through the Clerk to the Governors.
- The Complaints Committee must take a robust approach to the consideration of the evidence.
- The Complaints Committee must consider all the necessary evidence to make their decision. If further evidence is required from either party, the committee should adjourn and request that information. The Complaints Committee should only make their decision if they are satisfied they have sufficient evidence to make a final decision.
- The decision of the Complaints Committee will be given to the complainant in writing within five working days of the decision. There is no right of appeal following this decision.
- A parent who is dissatisfied with the Governors' response can contact the LA.
- The decision letter should outline the nature of the complaint, the factors taken into consideration and the decision of the Complaints Committee
- Under the Freedom of Information Act, parents can request all documents relating to their complaint.

Signed:

Date: