

St Bede's Catholic College



Complaints Procedure

Policy statement

- 1 **Aim:** The aim of this policy is to ensure that any complaint, including a complaint against a member of staff, is handled by St Bede's Catholic College sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is:
 - 1.1 good for relationships
 - 1.2 good education practice
 - 1.3 good business practice
- 2 **Policy Statement:** The College needs to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. We will investigate and try to resolve every complaint in a positive manner and will treat complaints as opportunities to:
 - put right any matter which may have gone wrong.
 - review our systems and procedures in the light of the relevant circumstances.

We recognise that a complaint which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment and damaging to relationships.

Who this policy applies to

Parents, pupils and other parties with an interest in St Bede's Catholic College

Procedures in support of this policy

PROCEDURES

The College is clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

- 1 **Minor Concerns - Informal:** In many cases, a concern can be resolved quickly and will not reach the stage of becoming a formal complaint. In most cases an individual member of the College will receive the first approach. It is helpful when staff are able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.
- 2 **Formal Procedures:** The formal procedures will need to be invoked within 5 school days when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. The Vice Principal is the Complaints Coordinator and has responsibility for the operation and management of the College complaints procedure. A formal complaint in writing will be acknowledged in writing within five school days. A letter of acknowledgement will state the action being taken and the likely time scale. There are three stages for dealing with formal complaints:
 - Stage one: complaint heard by staff member (not the subject of complaint) within fifteen school days
 - Stage two: complaint heard by Complaints Coordinator and then by the Principal if it has not been resolved within a further fifteen school days
 - Stage three: complaint heard by panel of Governors within a further twenty school days

Where a complaint was received during a school holiday or within 20 days from the end of a term or half term, the Principal will endeavour to expedite the investigation wherever possible.

HOW TO COMPLAIN

- 1 **Complaint Heard by Staff Member:** A complaint can be made in writing within 5 school days to a member of Staff, who will investigate and offer a resolution to the issue. The staff member should inform the Complaints Coordinator of the complaint and its resolution.

Complaints from parents of children with special educational needs or disability (SEND) should be referred to the college SENDco who will provide support as appropriate.

- 2 **Complaint Heard by Complaints Coordinator, Vice Principal:** A party who remains dissatisfied or who wishes to complain about an aspect of St Bede's policies, procedures, management or administration should write to the Complaints Coordinator with details of the complaint within a further 5 school days. The Complaints Coordinator will:

- a) investigate the matter or delegate the investigation to another senior member of staff, making sure that they:
 - i. review the initial complaint and how it was handled (Stage 1 - if applicable)
 - ii. establish what has happened so far and who has been involved;
 - iii. clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
 - iv. meet with the complainant or contact them to clarify information if necessary
 - v. clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
 - vi. interview persons involved in the matter
 - vii. keep detailed written records of their investigation

In the event of the complaint being against the Complaints Coordinator then the matter will be dealt with by the other Vice Principal or the Principal.

- b) When he/she is satisfied that they have all the necessary information, give a decision in writing within 15 school days.

3. **If the complaint has still not been resolved it will be heard by the Principal** who will follow the same procedure outlined above.

In the event of the complaint being against:

- the Principal then the matter will be dealt with by a Governor who may then not be part of a further panel in the event of the matter remaining unresolved
- a Governor, the matter will be dealt with by the Chair of Governors
- the Chair of Governors, it should be referred to the Director for Education within the Diocese.

4. **Complaint Heard by Panel of St Bede's Governing Body:** If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response, or wishes to escalate the complaint, they should write to the Clerk within 5 school days giving details of the complaint. The Chair or nominated director will convene a panel of the St Bede's Governing Body none of whose members has been involved in previous consideration of the complaint. At least one of the members of the panel must be independent of the management and running of the College. The aim of the hearing will always be to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the College and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that the complainant may not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

The Panel can:

- a. Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- b. Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- c. Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- d. If the complaint is upheld, recommend changes to systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

- e. The Chair of the Panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified in writing of the panel's response and any decisions within 20 school days.
- f. The decision of this panel is final.

RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

1. At each stage in the procedure the College will 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 explanation of what steps have been taken to ensure that the situation will not recur
 - An undertaking to review policies in light of the complaint
2. It is useful if complainants are able to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the situation could have been handled better is not an admission of negligence.
3. Retrospective complaints will not be investigated if they are over 6 months old.

VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

1. There will be occasions where despite all stages of the procedures having been followed the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of Trustees Board should inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed (as 3f, above).

MANAGING AND RECORDING COMPLAINTS

1. The College will record the progress of complaints and their final outcome. Brief notes of meetings and telephone calls should be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.
2. The Complaints Coordinator is responsible for records and their safe storage following GDPR guidance. All correspondence, and statements and records of complaint must be kept confidential but must be shown to HMI when requested.
3. Governors of the College should monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure.
4. Any findings or recommendations from the panel hearing the complaint will be available for inspection on the college premises by the Proprietor and the Principal.

PUBLICISING THE PROCEDURE

There is a legal requirement for the Complaints Procedure to be published and it is available from the college website under Policies.

Reviewed July 2021
To be reviewed July 2022