



## **ST.THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Complaints Policy**

#### **Mission Statement**

We are a Roman Catholic Community committed to:

- Mutual respect, positive encouragement and participation.
- Recognising the different personal and educational needs of all pupils.
- The delivery of the full national curriculum together with a religious education syllabus approved by the Catholic Church.
- The highest standards of teaching, learning and performance.
- Maintaining a supportive partnership with parents, the parish, and the wider community.
- The professional development of all staff.

#### **General Principles:**

- This procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school, or the services that it provides
- An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances
- To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event, being complained of, will not be considered.

#### **Scope :**

All matters relating to the actions of staff and application of school procedures where they affect the individual pupils concerned, except matters [relating to the curriculum, exclusion, admissions etc...] which are subject to separate procedures.

#### **Raising a Concern or Complaint**

##### **Informal Stage**

It is normally appropriate to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be by letter, by telephone or in person by appointment, requested via the school office. Many concerns

can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage.

In the case of **serious** concerns it may be appropriate to address them directly to the head teacher (or to the chair of the governing body, if the complaint is about the head teacher).

If you are uncertain about who to contact, please seek advice from the school office.

### **Formal Stage**

If your concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage you may choose to put the complaint in writing and pass it to the head teacher, who will be responsible for ensuring that it is investigated appropriately. If the complaint is about the head teacher, your complaint should be for the attention of the chair of the governing body and handed into the school office in a sealed envelope.

A complaint form is provided to assist you.

You should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.

It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the school to take to resolve your concern. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.

Please pass the completed form, in a sealed envelope to the school office. The envelope should be addressed to the head teacher, or to the chair of the governing body, as appropriate.

The head teacher (or chair) may invite you to a meeting to clarify your concerns and to explore the possibility of an informal resolution. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by a friend, if you wish, to assist you in explaining the nature of your concerns.

It is possible that your complaint will be resolved through a meeting with the head teacher (or chair). If not, arrangements will be made for the matter to be fully investigated, using the appropriate procedure. In any case you should learn in writing, usually within 5 days of the school receiving your formal complaint, of how the school intends to proceed. This notification should include an indication of the anticipated timescale.

Any investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, you will be informed in writing of its conclusion.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, you may request that the governing body reviews the process followed by the school, in handling the complaint. Any such request must be made in writing to the clerk to the governing body, within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described below will be followed. A Review Request form is provided for your convenience.

## **Review Process**

Any review of the process followed by the school will be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the governing body. This will usually take place within 10 school days of receipt of your request.

The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations should be considered sympathetically.

## **Handling Unreasonably Persistent, Harassing or Abusive Complainants**

The head teacher and governing body are fully committed to the improvement of our school. We welcome feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible. There is a procedure for parents to use if they wish to make a formal complaint.

Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of the school community.

The aim of this section is to provide information about our policy on unreasonably persistent complainants or harassment of staff.

## **What do we mean by 'an Unreasonably Persistent Complainant'?**

An unreasonably persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include persons who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner.

Unreasonable behaviour may include actions which are:

- out of proportion to the nature of the complaint, or
- persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, or
- personally harassing, or
- unjustifiably repetitious

It may also include an insistence on:

- pursuing unjustified complaints and/or
- unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints
- pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner, eg using abusive or threatening language; or
- making complaints in public or via a social networking site such as Facebook; or
- refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

### **What is 'Harassment'?**

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution.

Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:

- it appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause;
- the way in which a complaint or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others
- it has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

### **What does the school expect of any person wishing to raise a concern?**

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- avoid the use of violence, or threats of violence, towards people or property;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- follow the school's complaints procedure.

### **Schools' responses to unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment**

This policy sets out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty.

However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;
- inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his/her behaviour to fall under the terms of the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/Harassment section above;
- require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication and that these may be required to be channelled through the Local Authority.

### **Physical or verbal aggression**

The governing body will not tolerate any form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community. If there is evidence of any such aggression the school may:

- ban the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;
- request an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO);
- prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation;
- call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996.

Legitimate new complaints will always be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/Harassment section of the Policy. However, the school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from these individuals.

### **Vexatious Complaints**

If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, 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 governors is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. A model letter for use in such circumstances is included in an annex to this Policy and Procedure.

### **Child Protection & Safeguarding**

Child protection issues regarding pupils arising in schools are managed by the designated teacher and head teacher and will normally be referred to the relevant integrated area team for investigation of the family circumstances. The School's prime responsibility is to trigger the appropriate procedure through the LA and the school must not attempt to investigate the issues independently.

### **The Curriculum and Religious Worship**

Complaints about the curriculum should initially be considered by the governing body. If you are still not satisfied after this, or feel that the LA or governing body has acted "unreasonably" or failed to discharge a statutory duty in relation to the School curriculum or religious worship, you should contact the Local Authority Advisory team in the first instance.

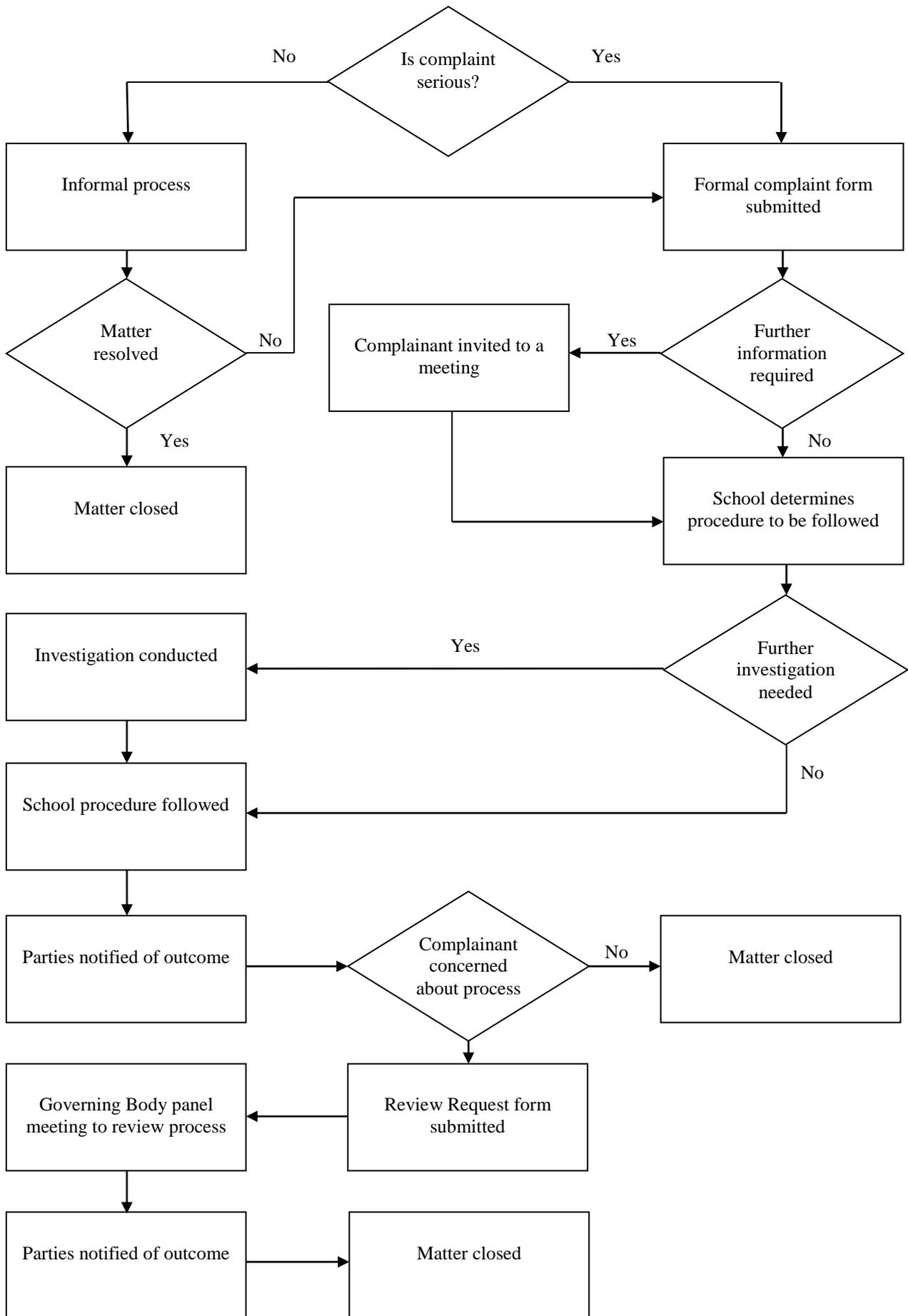
### **Exclusions**

Governing bodies are required to set up exclusions committees to consider exclusions. Guidance for procedures have been issued by the Department for Education.

### **Special Educational Needs**

Parents and school staff will naturally be in close contact about the special educational needs provision for individual children and concerns will normally be resolved between parents and the school. However, formal complaints should be referred to the special educational needs team.

## Summary of Process to Resolve Complaints





## **Formal Complaint Form**

Please complete this form and return it, via the school office, to the Head teacher (or Clerk to the Governing Body), who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage in the procedure

Your Name:

Relationship with school - e.g. Parent of a pupil on the school roll:

Pupils Name (if relevant to your complaint):

Address:

Daytime Telephone No:

Evening Telephone No:

E-mail:

Please give concise details of your complaint (including dates, names of any witnesses etc.) to allow the complaint to be fully investigated:

You may continue on a separate sheet of paper, or attach any relevant documents if you wish.  
Number of additional pages attached:

## **Formal Complaint Form.....(cont)**

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (i.e Who have you spoken with, or written to and what was the outcome?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Please complete this form and return it to the school office.

### **School Use**

Date form received:

Date response sent:

Received by:

Sent by:

Complaint referred to :

Date:

## Complaint Review Request Form

Please complete this form and return it, via the school office, to the Head teacher (or Clerk to the Governing Body), who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage in the procedure

Your Name:

Address:

Daytime Telephone No:

Evening Telephone No:

E-mail:

Dear Sir,

I submitted a formal complaint to the school on ..... and am dissatisfied with the procedure that has been followed.

My complaint was submitted to ..... and I received a response from ..... on .....

I have attached copies of my formal complaint and the response(s) from the school.

I am dissatisfied with the way in which the procedure was carried out because:

You may continue on a separate sheet of paper, or attach any relevant documents if you wish.  
Number of additional pages attached:

