



## **Complaints Policy – information for parents**

### **Introduction**

St John Bosco College is dedicated to providing the best possible education and support for all its pupils. This means having a clear, fair, and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints to or against the school, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.

All school staff will be made aware of complaints procedures and expected to review this policy regularly in order that they are familiar with our process of dealing with complaints and can be of the most assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

This policy explains that procedure, and the steps that it outlines should be referred to and followed by all pupils and their parents whenever an issue arises that causes them concern.

This policy does not apply to complaints about: admissions, exclusions and staff disciplinary proceedings.

If there is an allegation or concern about physical or sexual misconduct towards a child, or there is a belief that a child may be at risk of serious harm, the school may immediately refer the case to child protection and welfare services. If it is decided that there is cause for an official investigation, the decisions by these authorities will supersede those made by the school and outlined in this policy.

For more information on our school's provision for protecting our pupils, read our child protection and safeguarding policy, and the allegations of abuse against staff policy.

### **1. When a concern first arises**

If you have a concern that you would like to take up with the school you should initially inform a member of staff either in person, over the telephone, or in writing. You will then be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with your concern.

You may wish to approach your child's teacher first as they will be best placed to help you either directly or by figuring out which other member of staff you should be speaking to.

We encourage parents to approach staff with any concerns they may have, and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding.

If your complaint is about a member of staff, you should first raise this with the headteacher either in person or in writing, and a meeting can be arranged with the headteacher to discuss the issue at hand.

If your complaint is about the headteacher, you should raise your concern in writing with the chair of governors.

The chair of governors may refer complaints that are taken straight to them back to the appropriate member of staff if they do not warrant the governing body's involvement at that point.

## **1.2 Initial informal meeting, complaint heard by staff member**

Once a concern has been raised you may be invited to attend an informal meeting with a member of staff or the headteacher to discuss your concerns.

You are welcome to bring a friend or partner to this meeting. It may be appropriate for a pupil to attend the meeting if their parent has raised a concern, depending on the nature of the issue.

Staff have a responsibility to ensure that you understand any future points of action that have been agreed upon in this meeting and should make a record of what has been discussed, as well as any outcomes and a plan of action, if one has been agreed.

All staff will do their best to ensure that your concerns are dealt with appropriately and efficiently but if you cannot come to an agreement, or are dissatisfied with the outcome of your meeting, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the headteacher.

## **2. Formal complaints, complaint heard by headteacher**

In order to ensure that complaints are processed efficiently and effectively, St John Bosco College deals with formal complaints in three stages:

### ***Stage 1: The Headteacher***

If you do not feel that your concern has been dealt with as you would like, are unhappy with the outcome of your informal meeting, or feel that the issue is serious enough that it warrants it, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the headteacher. The school has a standard complaints form which is attached at the end of this policy.

The headteacher should acknowledge your complaint in writing within 5 working days. They may already be aware of the situation. They will outline their decision if there is one to be made, and any action to be taken as a result of your complaint.

The headteacher may call you in for a meeting to discuss the issue outcome, possible solutions, or to explain what has or will happen as a result of your complaint.

The headteacher will keep a record of all interactions with you and other staff, meetings and decisions made in reference to your complaint.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, the headteacher will talk to that employee. If it is an allegation of abuse, a formal investigation may be instigated by the school or external child welfare authorities to whom the school reports. Please refer to our allegations of abuse against staff policy for an outline of this procedure.

Complaints about the headteacher should be reported to the chair of governors by letter or via the school office (office e-mail address).

### **Stage 2: The chair of governors**

If, having spoken to the headteacher, you are dissatisfied, you may lodge your complaint with the chair of governors in writing, explaining your concern and the steps that have led up to you taking this course of action.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, that employee will be given the opportunity to write a response, which will be sent to the chair of governors within 5 working days of the complaint being lodged with them.

The chair of governors will respond to you in writing within 10 working days outlining their response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If they have decided not to take any further action on the issue, they will explain what they have decided, how they have reached this decision, and will outline your right of appeal and how you can start your appeal.

## **3. Appeals**

### **Stage 3: Governor' appeal panel**

If you would like to launch an appeal following the outcome of a formal complaint that you have lodged, this will be taken to the appeals panel of the governing body.

#### **The appeals panel**

The appeals panel will be made up of members of the governing body. No member of the governing body can sit on the appeals panel if they have had any former knowledge or involvement in the case that is being dealt with at that time.

The panel will give careful consideration to how the complainant can be made to feel most comfortable presenting to the panel, especially in the case of a young child having to present or explain information.

#### **Appeals procedure**

The procedure for an appeal is as follows:

1. *The complainant and headteacher will enter the hearing together.*
2. *The chair will introduce the panel members and outline the process.*
3. *The complainant will explain the complaint.*
4. *The headteacher and panel will question the complainant.*
5. *The headteacher will explain the school's actions.*
6. *The complainant and panel will question the headteacher.*
7. *The complainant will sum up their complaint.*
8. *The headteacher will sum up the school's actions.*
9. *The chair will explain that both parties will hear from the panel within 10 working days.*
10. *Both parties will leave together while the panel decides.*
11. *The clerk will stay with the panel to clarify.*

#### **The appeals panel will:**

- dismiss all or part of the complaint
- uphold all or part of the complaint

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- evaluate all the evidence available and recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures as a preventative step against similar problems arising in the future.

St John Bosco College will review and evaluate *all* complaints no matter how far they are taken or what the outcome to ensure that similar problems are avoided in the future or to see if they could have been managed any more effectively.

The panel's decision is final. If you are unhappy with the outcome, you have the choice of seeking mediation (see below) or you are entitled to take your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education.

#### **Stage 4. Local Authority Mediation Role – optional**

Local Authorities are not part of the formal statutory process for school complaints. However St John Bosco College works closely with Wandsworth Local Education Authority and governors believe there can be value in using a mediation process for some complaints. If both parties are in agreement, St John Bosco College Governors have agreed to offer Local Authority mediation at this stage before a complaint is escalated to the Secretary of State for Education.

Mediation is an effort to bring the two parties together; it does not formally reinvestigate or propose remedies. Wandsworth Local Authority mediation service can not impose a resolution to a complaint. Wandsworth involvement in mediation shall be time limited to no more than six weeks; school term times will need to be taken into consideration. Should a resolution fail to be reached within this time period, the complainant will be advised of their right to escalate their complaint to the Secretary of State for Education.

#### **5. Complaints about the governing body or LA to the Secretary of State**

The Secretary of State may hear a complaint and intervene if:

- the complaint relates to a failure by the governing body or LA to carry out its statutory duties
- the complainant believes the governing body or LA is acting unreasonably. The test for this is that no reasonable authority or governing body, acting with due regard to its statutory duties, would have reached that decision
- intervention is expedient (i.e., there is an instruction the Secretary of State can give to one or other party that would put matters right).

The complainant should set out fully the concerns and reasons why the complaint is being submitted, enclosing all previous correspondence relevant to the complaint. They should write to The Secretary of State, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT or call 0870 001 2288.

#### **6. Complaints to Ofsted**

Ofsted also has powers to investigate certain complaints by parents about their child's school. Complainants should write to Ofsted, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7LA or call 08456 404045 or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## 7. Staff complaints

Staff who have a concern about a colleague or a volunteer member of staff should refer to our whistleblowing policy.

The procedure for dealing with any other staff complaints or employment grievances is set out in the school's **staff discipline, conduct and grievance policy**

---

**Signed by:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **The chair of governors** **Date: .....**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Headteacher** **Date: .....**

**This policy will be reviewed annually**

**Re-Adopted: January 2019**

**Review date: Spring 2022**



**St John  
Bosco  
College**

## **ST JOHN BOSCO COLLEGE POLICY FOR HANDLING UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT, HARASSING, VEXATIOUS, UNREASONABLE OR ABUSIVE COMPLAINTS**

The head teacher and governing body are 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/carers 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 and or behave in an unacceptable manner. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening, inappropriate or harassing behaviour.

The aim of this policy is to clarify the process for dealing with unreasonable complainants or parents who do not act appropriately.

### **What do we mean by ‘an unreasonable complainant’?**

An unreasonable complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include parents and carers who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner and those who do not act in an appropriate manner towards staff at the school.

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 or
  - Obsessive, harassing, or prolific
- Prolific correspondence or excessive email or telephone contact about a concern or complaint.
- Repetitious complaints where the complainant has no view about what would satisfy him/her and/or no intention to resolve the complaint.
- Acting in a way not in line with the school aim of reaching a resolution and working with the school

- An insistence on
  - Pursuing unjustified or unmeritorious complaints and/or
  - Unrealistic outcomes to unjustified complaints
- An insistence on
  - Pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner e.g. using abusive or threatening language;
  - Making complaints in public; 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 seek a resolution.

Behaviour will fall within the scope of this policy if:

- It appears to be deliberately targeted over a significant period of time at one or more members of school staff or others.
- The way in which a complaint or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes ongoing distress to school staff or others;
- It has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.
- Actions are pursued aggressively or in any manner not appropriate to an effective resolution

### **What can you expect from the school?**

Anyone who raises informal or formal issues and complaints with the school can expect the school to:

- Follow the School's complaints procedure
- Respond within a reasonable time;
- Be available for consultation within a reasonable time limit, bearing in mind the needs of pupils at the school and the nature of the complaint
- Respond with courtesy and respect;
- Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the School's complaints procedure, other policies and practice and in line with guidance from Wandsworth Council;
- Keep those involved informed of progress towards a resolution.

### **What the school expects of you**

St John Bosco College expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- Treat all staff with courtesy and respect
- Respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- Never to use violence (including 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;
- Recognise that some problems may not be resolved in a short time;
- Follow the school's complaints procedure.
- Speak politely and respectfully using appropriate language and avoid any aggression or verbal abuse, including name-calling
- Raise concerns/complaints in an appropriate place and at an appropriate time (for example not in front of other parents or pupils and not in an open public space)
- To be prepared to work towards a resolution and in partnership with the school

### **St John Bosco College's responses to unreasonably persistent complaints, vexatious complainants, unreasonable complaints or harassment**

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's complaints procedure. Taken together, these documents set out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty and reach a resolution.

However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take any 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 Policy;
- Require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a third 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.
- Inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered to fall under the terms of this policy and that any complaint will not be investigated further until it is pursued in a manner the School considers to be reasonable
- Place restrictions on the individual's access to school and/or school staff.
- Cease all correspondence and communication with the complainant other than that necessary for the health and safety of any child/adult in school.
- Involve the policy
- Involve officers of the local authority

The school has a duty of care to staff and pupils and will take emergency measures should these become necessary in extreme cases.

## **Physical or verbal aggression**

St John Bosco College, its governing body and Wandsworth Council will not tolerate **any** form of physical or verbal aggression or personal harassment against school staff. If staff are subject to this type of aggression the school may:

- Prohibit the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;
- Inform the individual that communication with them will cease other than in an emergency
- Request an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO);
- Prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.

## **7. Time frame and Review**

If a complainant's harassing/persistent behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the school, may resume the process identified above.

If a complainant's harassing/persistent complaining behaviour is modified and the complaint still lies within the time limit specified within the Schools complaints policy, the School will use its discretion and may resume the investigation of the complaint. The School will review as appropriate, and at a minimum of once a year, any sanctions applied in the context of this policy

Legitimate new complaints, if not pursued in a harassing or unreasonable way, will still be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the vexatious or persistent complaints policy. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals subject to the policy.

**Re-adopted: January 2019**

**Review date: January 2022**