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Complaints Policy

St Louis Grammar School

J. O'Neill
Principal

Board of Governors responsible: Mrs M. Black/Mr S. McCann/Dr C. Wilson

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

Many issues raised by parents, carers, and the community, can be concerns rather than complaints and can be easily resolved without a formal complaints procedure being adopted. Nonetheless St Louis Grammar School is committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without the requirement for formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal Complaints Procedure set out in this Complaints Policy.

For the school to be best placed to investigate a complaint, the complaint should be made in a timely fashion and certainly within one year of the incident complained of.

With the exception of the referral of child protection concerns anonymous complaints cannot be dealt with.

The prime aim of the school's policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and quickly as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. By their very nature, complaints against schools are generally about the treatment of children, but are often raised by a child's parents or carers, rather than the children themselves.

The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

St Louis Grammar School Complaints Policy has five main stages

In summary they are as follows: -

- Stage 1– A concern is raised informally with a staff member/Form Teacher or Year Head concerning homework/behaviour/bullying etc. If the concern is unable to be resolved at Stage 1 it can be progressed to Stage 2.
- Stage 2– A Formal complaint is made in writing and is heard by an appropriate member of the School Leadership Team. If the Formal complaint is unable to be resolved at Stage 2 it can be progressed to Stage 3.
- Stage 3– The Formal Complaint is heard by Principal. If the Formal complaint is unable to be resolved at Stage 3 it can be progressed to Stage 4.
- Stage 4*– The complaint is heard by the Board of Governors Complaints Panel (Mrs M Black/Mr S McCann).
- Stage 5– Appeals Process – Full Board of Governors. The decision of the Full Board of Governors is final and binding.

** Any complaints relating to the Principal should be commenced at Stage 4 of the process only.*

Stage 1 – Raising a concern

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. Depending on the concern initial contact will normally be with the child's Form Teacher/Head of Year. On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. It is expected that the vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. You should observe the school's existing protocols for arranging and conducting initial contact with the child's Form Teacher/Head of Year.

Stage 2 – Complaint heard by an appropriate member of the School Leadership Team

If you are not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, please write to the school within 10 school working days, stating the nature of your continuing complaint, and what you are dissatisfied with.

You should use the attached form (**Appendix 1**) for this purpose.

Please address your complaint to ***The Principal's Secretary*** at the school, and it will be forwarded to the appropriate member of the school's Leadership Team.

The school will consider your complaint. The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. The school will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 school working days of receiving it. In many cases this response will also report on the action the school has taken to resolve the issue. Alternatively, and if necessary a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. This meeting will normally take place within 10 school working days. The aim will be to resolve the matter as quickly as possible, with an agreed resolution appropriate to the complaint, (taking into consideration the nature of the complaint and an appropriate course of action while adhering to school policy.)

Stage 3 – Complaint heard by the Principal

If you remain unsatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 please write to or call the school within 10 school working days of receiving our response. You will need to inform the school why you remain unsatisfied.

The Principal will arrange for a further investigation and it may be necessary for the Principal to meet with you to discuss. Following the investigation, the Principal will normally give a written response within 10 school working days. If you are dissatisfied with the result at Stage 3, you will need to let the school know within 10 school working days of receiving the response.

Please address all correspondence to the Principal's Secretary.

Stage 4 – Complaint heard by the Governing Body’s Complaints Panel

If the matter remains unresolved following completion of Stage 3 or relates to the Principal, you will then need to write to the Chair of the School’s Board of Governors providing details of your complaint. You must do so within 10 working days of receipt of the Principal’s response at Stage 3.

The Chair or a nominated Governor will convene a Complaints Panel consisting of three Governors who have no previous knowledge of the complaint. The hearing will normally take place within 20 school working days of receipt of the written request for Stage 4 investigation.

(There may be occasions when difficulties over availability of Governors make this time scale difficult to keep to, but it remains the aim of Governors to resolve matters as quickly as possible).

The aim of the Complaints Panel hearing is where possible to *impartially resolve the complaint* and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. The Complaints Panel will seek to decide, on the basis of the information presented at the meeting, whether the complaint is justified, in whole or in part, and decide on any appropriate action to be taken.

All parties will be notified of the Complaint’s Panel’s decision in writing within ten school working days after the date of the hearing.

Stage 5 – Appeals Process – Full Board of Governors

Finally, if you still believe that your complaint has not been addressed you may write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors requesting that you be allowed to meet with the full Board of Governors to appeal the outcomes. The Chairperson will be responsible for ensuring that you are invited to the next suitable scheduled meeting of the Board of Governors where your appeal will be heard. Your written request should be as concise as possible and set out specially the grounds for your Appeal.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. This will confirm that your letter has been raised and provide you with the date and time of the meeting at which you will have an opportunity to discuss your concerns. You will not be permitted to be accompanied or represented by any person, unless it is deemed appropriate by the Board of Governors. This meeting will normally take place within 30 working days of your Appeal request having been received.

Following this meeting, and within 10 working days of that meeting, you should expect a final written response. This will indicate the Governors’ findings, their recommendation and the reasons supporting their decision.

Stage 5 is, in all cases, the last school-based stage of the Complaints Process and is final and binding.

For advice on what further steps may be available to you if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 5, you may contact, NEELB, County Hall Ballymena where advice may be available dependent upon the nature of the complaint.


NB *Complaints which prove to be malicious or vexatious may incur appropriate action by the school and/or any individuals complained against.*

Policy adopted by St Louis Grammar School Child Protection/Safeguarding Board of Governors Sub-Committee (Dr C Wilson (Designated Governor)/Mr S McCann).


How a parent/carer makes a complaint

If a parent has a potential child protection concern:


I have a concern about my/a child's safety.




I can talk to the Class/Form Teacher.




If I am still concerned, I can talk to either
The Designated/Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection Mrs McGreevy or
Mrs Toner/ Mrs O'Neill



If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to
the Chair of the Board of Governors



If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to
the NI Public Services Ombudsman - Telephone: 0800 343 424



At any time, I can talk to the local Children's Services Gateway Team
Telephone 028 9442 4459 or 0300 234 333 or Out of Hours 028 9504 9999
or the PSNI Central Referral Unit at 028 9025 9299

FORM TO NOTIFY A FORMAL SCHOOL COMPLAINT

Please return this form to the Principal's Secretary at St Louis Grammar School

Name of student to whom issue relates _____

Class Group _____

Your name _____

Your relationship to student: _____

Address for correspondence:

Postcode: _____

Daytime Phone No: _____

Evening Phone No: _____

Email address:

Details of Complaint:

(Please be as specific as possible. For example, give dates, who was involved and where, etc)

Please attach a continuation sheet with additional information if you wish.

If you wish to present the Panel with any papers about the complaint, please liaise with the Principal's secretary, who will arrange for copies to be made.

Signed: _____

Date: _____