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1) Purpose

This policy sets out how parents and other stakeholders can raise concerns or complaints with the school, and the procedure that the school will take in relation to such concerns or complaints.

2) Scope

This policy applies to all matters relating to the actions of staff and application of school procedures where they affect the individual pupils concerned.

The policy does not apply to concerns or complaints arising from certain matters, such as curriculum, admissions, exclusions etc. where such matters have their own separate policies. This is because specific complaints procedures are set out in those other policies.

3) Defined terms

In this policy:

A “**concern**” means a worry or anxiety expressed to a member of staff either verbally or in writing.

A “**complaint**” means a written statement of dissatisfaction delivered to the School in the form set out in Appendix 1, and which is eligible for investigation in accordance with this policy.

“**Exceptional circumstances**” may include bullying, safe guarding, whistle-blowing or discrimination amongst other things that cause material distress or pose a material risk to pupils or staff.

A “**persistent complainant**” is a parent or member of the public who engages in unreasonable behaviour when raising a concern or complaint, and in respect of whom the procedure in Part D of this policy shall apply.

4) Eligibility of complaints

A complaint may be brought under this policy by any parent, former pupil or other third party who is not a current pupil or member of staff.

To allow for a proper investigation, complaints must be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. Any matters raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of will not be considered, unless the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors believe there to be exceptional circumstances.

An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this policy unless the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors believe there to be



exceptional circumstances.

5) Records

All documentation relating to the complaint, its investigation and outcomes should be stored securely for six years after the date of the complaint. Where the complaint relates to the welfare or protection of a child, the school may retain documentation for up to 6 years after the child has reached the age of 18.



Part A. Concerns or complaints relating to a member of staff (except in respect of the Head Teacher)

1) How to raise a concern

- a If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school or with any aspects of our processes and systems, they should, in the first instance, contact the member of staff directly responsible who most usually will be their child's teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way and through pastoral support from the church. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress.
- b Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher or relevant member of staff, or that their concern is of a particularly serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with a Senior Manager (being designated post-holder/middle manager, such as a Key-stage Co-ordinator, Head of Department, or Deputy Head) or if a Senior manager is unavailable, the Head Teacher.

2) How to make a formal complaint

- a. If the issue is not resolved at the informal stage and the complainant wishes to bring a formal complaint then the issue must be set out in writing (in the form set out in Appendix 1) and delivered to the Head Teacher.
- b. The written complaint should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies (or reference to) all relevant documents.

3) Timings and investigations

- a The Head Teacher (or a Senior Manager) will contact the parent within five school days of receiving the formal complaint.
- b The Head Teacher (or Senior Manager) will collect such evidence as he/she deems necessary. Where this involves an interview with a member of staff who is the subject of the complaint, that member of staff may be accompanied by their friend, representative or advisor.
- c Parents may be required to attend a meeting to discuss the complaint. A resolution may be reached at this stage and the complaint be withdrawn.



d If a resolution has not been reached with the Head Teacher (or Senior Manager), the Head Teacher will provide response to the formal complaint in writing within ten school days of the date of the notification to the parent as referred to above.

4) Outcome of a formal complaint.

If the Head Teacher responds to a formal complaint in writing, the response may conclude one of the following:

- 1) There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld.
- 2) The complaint is not substantiated by the evidence.
- 3) The complaint was substantiated in part or in full. (some details may then be given of action the school may be taking to review procedures etc... but details of the investigation or of any disciplinary procedures will not be released)
- 4) The matter has been fully investigated and that appropriate procedures are being followed, which are strictly confidential (e.g. where staff disciplinary procedures are being followed).

If the complainant considers that the decision of the Head Teacher is irrational or unfair, then the complainant may bring a further complaint against the Head Teacher under Part B of this procedure.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, the complainant may request that the Governing Body review the process followed by the Head Teacher in handling the complaint. Any such request must be made in writing within 2 weeks of receiving notice of the decision from the Head Teacher, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described in Part C will be followed.



Part B. Complaining about the actions of the Head Teacher

1) Informal stage

- a. If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the Head Teacher, they should, in the first instance, contact the Head Teacher (or the Chair of the Governing Body, if appropriate). The person with the concern may be required to attend a meeting with the Head Teacher and/or Chair of the Governing Body, and an informal resolution may result in the procedure being terminated forthwith.
- b. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information. If the matter is not resolved, and both parties agree, then a third party may be invited to act as a mediator at a further meeting. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way and through pastoral support from the church.

2) Formal Stage

- a. If the concern is not resolved at the informal stage, the complainant may wish to lodge a formal complaint in writing by delivering it to the School for the attention of the Chair of the Governing Body. The Chair of the Governing Body will contact the parent within five school days of receiving the formal complaint.
- b. The formal complaint should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, copies (or reference to) relevant documents, etc. In addition the complainant will be invited to meet with the Chair of the Governing Body to present oral evidence or to clarify the complaint.
- c. The Chair may interview of witnesses and others who may provide relevant information, including the Head Teacher who may be accompanied at this meeting by a friend, representative, or advisor. The Head Teacher will be provided with a copy of the complaint and any additional evidence presented by the complainant or collected the Chair.
- d. The investigation will be concluded within 2 weeks of the Chair contacting the parent, and within 3 weeks of such contact, the complainant and the Head Teacher will be informed in writing of the outcome. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary/capability action.
- e. If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, the complainant may request that the Governing Body review the process followed by the Chair in handling the complaint. Any such**



request must be made in writing within 2 weeks of receiving notice of the decision from the Chair, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described in Part C will be followed.

Part C. Review Process

- a. Any review of the process followed by the Head Teacher or the Chair shall be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the Governing Body.
- b. The review will be conducted through a consideration of written submissions by the complainant and Head Teacher or Chair, although oral submissions may be permitted by agreement of the panel.
- c. The panel will then invite the Head Teacher or the Chair, as appropriate, to make a response to the complaint, and will review all relevant information including all records kept of the investigation and decision-making process.

The panel will decide one of the following:

- 1) The investigation by the Head Teacher or the Chair was carried out properly, and the decision was correct.
- 2) The investigation by the Head Teacher or the Chair was carried out properly, but the decision was incorrect (in whole or in part).
- 3) The investigation by the Head Teacher or the Chair was not carried out properly, but the decision was correct.
- 4) The investigation by the Head Teacher or the Chair was not carried out properly, and the decision was incorrect (in whole or in part).

The complainant is not entitled to access any details of the investigation except for any statements that may have been provided by their child. Any information relating to the application of disciplinary procedures is strictly confidential.

If a complainant believes that the Governing Body has acted unfairly or irrationally in handling the complaint, then the complainant may make representations to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.



Part D. Persistent complaints and harassment

The school will take independent advice if it considers that a complainant is a persistent complainant and before applying this part of the policy. The behaviour of a persistent complainant may be characterised by:

- 1) actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- 2) prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint;
- 3) uses Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably;
- 4) an insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes;
- 5) an insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- 6) an insistence on only dealing with the Head Teacher on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the School to deal with such matters; and/or
- 7) an insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the School because it is unlawful or unfair.

Harassment is the pursuit of concerns or complaints in a manner which is done is intended to cause distress or disruption rather than resolution. Complaints are targeted in such a way that they:

- 1) appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of School staff and/or governing body members;
- 2) cause on going distress to individual member(s) of School staff and/or governing body members;
- 3) have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the School community;
- 4) are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include



situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

The school expects the following from parents/ members of the public:

- 1) treat all School staff and governing body with courtesy and respect;
- 2) respect the needs and well-being of pupils and staff in the school;
- 3) avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property;
- 4) avoid any aggression or verbal abuse;
- 5) recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in Schools work and allow the School a reasonable time to respond;
- 6) (in the case of a complaint) follow the School's Complaints Policy

The School's actions in cases of persistent complaints or harassment

In the first instance the School will verbally inform the complainant that his / her behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable / unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy. This will be confirmed in writing.

If the behaviour is not modified the School will take some or all of the following actions as necessary:

- 1) inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the School to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this policy;
- 2) inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties;
- 3) inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the school should be by letter only;



- 4) (in the case of physical, or verbal aggression) take advice from LA HR / Legal Services (services purchased by the Governing Body) and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the school site, or proceed straight to a temporary ban;
- 5) consider taking advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation;
- 6) consider taking advice from the HR / Legal Services of the LA about putting in place a specific procedure for dealing with complaints from the complainant, i.e. the complainant will not be able to deal directly with the Head Teacher but only with a third person to be identified by the Governing Body, who will investigate, determine whether or not the concern / complaint is reasonable or vexatious and then advise the Head Teacher accordingly.

Legitimate new complaints may still be considered even if the person making them is, or has been, subject to this section of the Complaints Policy. However, the school will be advised by the HR / Legal Services of the LA.

If a complainant's persistent complaining/harassing 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 at an appropriate level. In these circumstances advice may be sought from the HR/Legal Services of the LA.



APPENDIX: COMPLAINT FORM

Christ Church School Complaint Form

Please complete this form and return it to the School Office, or send it directly the Head Teacher or Chair to 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's role):

.....

Pupil's name (if relevant to your complaint):.....

Your address:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

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

You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional documents, if you wish. The more information you provide, the more it will help us to investigate your complaint.

Number of additional pages attached =

Approved by Governors November 2016

Date of next Review November 2019





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?

I confirm that all the statements I have made above are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Your signature:

Date:

THIS SECTION IS FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY:

Date Form received:

Received by:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by:

Complaint referred to:

Date of referral:

END OF FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM