



St John Payne Catholic School

## Concerns & Complaints

What to do if you are worried about your child's progress or wellbeing at school



## Voicing your concern

From time to time, parents and carers may have concerns about their son or daughter's education and/or wellbeing at school. Quite often this is due to a misunderstanding about school policy or practice. Sometimes the student may be behaving unusually at home or at school and/or expressing their own concerns. Whatever the situation, we would encourage you, and/or your child, to **talk to us about it at the earliest opportunity** so that we can help sort out the problem.

If it is your child's academic progress that you wish to speak to us about, please make an appointment, through the School Office, telephone number 01245 256030, to see the appropriate **Head of Department** in the first instance. If it is an issue around your child's wellbeing, please ask to see their **Head of Year**.

## Dealing with your concern or complaint

Our **full complaints procedure** is set out in a separate document which you can view on the school website or you can request a copy from the School Office. This leaflet is a **summary** of how the procedure operates so that you have a quick overview of how we can help you.

The majority of concerns from parents, carers and others are handled under the following general procedure:

The procedure is divided into three stages:

**Stage 1** aims to resolve the concern through **informal contact** at the appropriate level in school, as described above.

**Stage 2** is the first **formal stage**, at which written complaints are considered by the Headteacher.

**Stage 3** is the next stage once Stage 2 has been worked through. It involves a **complaints appeal panel** of governors.

Usually, concerns and complaints are resolved either at Stage 1 or Stage 2. The Chair of Governors has the discretion to offer, or agree to, a **Stage 3** complaints appeal panel if it is felt that this will help move things forward. Because it is a time-consuming process to set up and run, however, an appeal panel is **not an automatic right** for complainants.

Please note that this procedure does not include complaints about the **personal conduct** of members of the school's staff, teaching or non-teaching, as these are handled under confidential arrangements in line with employment law. If you are concerned about the conduct of any member of staff other than the Headteacher, you should write to the Headteacher. If your concern is about the personal conduct of the Headteacher, please write to the Chair of Governors c/o the school.

## **Response times**

We aim to acknowledge concerns and complaints within **three working days** of receipt and to respond fully, or with a holding reply, **within 10 working days**. It is not usually possible to deal with complaints during school holiday periods when the School Office is closed.

The aim throughout is to resolve any concerns, anxieties, misunderstandings or complaints as soon as possible in the interests of all concerned, but especially for the good of your son or daughter.

## **What happens if you do not feel satisfied with the outcome?**

Please note that the Local Authority (Essex County Council) has no powers to intervene in general complaints against schools. Similarly, Ofsted does not deal with individual parents' issues.

A complaint may be made to the Secretary of State for Education **if a person believes that a governing body is acting "unreasonably," or is failing to carry out its statutory duties properly.**

Please bear in mind, however, that the Secretary of State will expect you to have gone through the school's complaints procedures **before** contacting the Department for Education. You should set out fully the concerns and reasons why the complaint is being submitted, enclosing all previous correspondence relevant to the complaint:

The Secretary of State for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
LONDON  
SW1P 3BT

## **REMEMBER:**

**IT'S GOOD TO TALK FIRST. WE ARE HERE TO LISTEN!**