



St. Columba's College

Complaints Policy and Procedure

This policy applies across the College at all age ranges including Early Years, Prep and Senior Schools.

St. Columba's College is conducted in the educational tradition of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. As such it nurtures a holistic environment which includes a commitment to academic excellence, religious values, friendly discipline, and personal attention.

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Section 1 Principles

The College believes that constant feedback is an important aspect of school improvement and raising standards. Open, honest, and supportive communication is valued. The nature of the College as a collaborative community, based on trust and shared values and purposes, requires an effective mechanism for managing complaints. Students, parents and staff are encouraged to share their views and opinions and any concerns they may have. People who have concerns or complaints, whether they are students or adults, should feel that they can be voiced and will be considered seriously, dealt with comprehensively and as far as possible in confidence.

Section 2 Practices

A working assumption of the policy is that complaints are best dealt with by those nearest to the point of concern (please see guidance at end of this policy for whom to direct an issue). The first stage of the process should be informal, but if that fails to resolve the complaint, then the complainant should be asked to put their issue in writing to the staff member responsible.

The policy aims to ensure that all complaints are dealt with as quickly and sensitively as possible, and by the person best able to do so. A complainant should be able to expect to have a response, even if not the final response, to their complaint within 24 hours of having made the complaint. Parents are made aware of the procedures for making complaints and appealing against decisions through the availability of the policy on the website and through communication at the point a complaint is levelled.

The complaints policy may only be used by current parents of the school.

The complaints policy would not be used in relation to decisions taken by the College in relation to exclusion and required removal from the College.

For the sake of clarity, it is important to establish that there is a difference between a concern and a complaint.

Concern Defined

A concern is likely to require discussion, perhaps involving a teacher, student and parent, and it is hoped that it can be resolved quickly by such a discussion and appropriate action. A concern is dealt with through the normal, day to day, structures of the College. If this does not resolve the concern, then it could become a complaint.

Complaint Defined

A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues related to physical or emotional wellbeing, or over security, or when the College's stated aims or values are being ignored.

A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint.

If the complaint concerns a Child Protection issue or involves an allegation of abuse by a member of the College, then in the Senior School, the Deputy Head, the DSL (Designated

Senior Lead), will manage the matter and in the case of Prep School, its DSL, the Pastoral Deputy Head will take this responsibility. The Headmaster will be informed immediately of such an allegation against a member of staff.

Complaints levelled at the Headmaster are to be made in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair will utilize the panel process described below and liaise with the Deputy Head – Senior or Head of Prep where necessary.

Complaints levelled at the Head of the Prep School are to be made in writing to the Headmaster.

The Headmaster will be informed of all complaints and their outcome.

A written record is kept of all formal complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stages or proceed to the Board of Governors.

In accordance with the Regulatory Requirements for the Provision of Information (DCSF Standard 6, para. 6(j)) the number of complaints registered requiring enactment of the formal procedure (see below) during the preceding College year will be made available on request. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept strictly confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act, as amended, requests access to them.

Section 3 Procedures

Stage 1 – Informal

All complaints will normally be dealt with in the first instance by an appropriate member of the SLT or PLT as appropriate, who will keep the Headmaster informed.

Please note that it is always possible for a complaint to be made and considered initially on an informal basis (if in any doubt over whom to contact then please speak to - in the case of the Prep School, the Head of Prep and the Senior School, the Deputy Head).

If a complaint cannot be resolved informally then it progresses to Stage 2, when it becomes a formal complaint, and its nature requires a report in writing.

Stage 2 - Formal

The complaint should be made formally in writing to the appropriate member of staff (as above, where guidance may be necessary, consult in the case of the Prep School, the Head of Prep and the Senior School, the Deputy Head).

The member of staff written to will document the complaint, acknowledge it in writing within 24 hours of receipt, and either action it personally or refer it directly to a Deputy Head or the Headmaster to manage in the Senior School, and in the case of the Prep, the Head of the Prep School. The nature of the complaint may be such that the individual in receipt of it will consult with all those directly concerned and aim to deal with the complaint personally normally within 7 to 14 working days of the complaint being registered.

The staff member dealing with the complaint may also meet with the complainant and, following any necessary investigation or actions, provide a written response to the complaint, copied to the Headmaster.

If the complaint is not dealt with directly by the Head of Prep or the Senior School Deputy Head, and/or it cannot be resolved, then it is referred to the Head. The Headmaster deals with it directly, normally within 7-14 working days of first being notified by either the complainant or the staff member involved that the matter has not been resolved.

If the complaint cannot be resolved by the Headmaster, then he will advise the complainant of his/her right to refer the matter to the next stage, which is to pass the complaint to the Board of Governors.

A written record of all Stage 2 complaints is retained along with any resulting actions that were taken.

Stage 3 - Board of Governors

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint as dealt with at Stage 2 (above) then he/she will be invited to write to the Clerk to the Governors, (at the College address) requesting its referral to the Board of Governors. The Clerk will notify the Chair of Governors within 7 working days of receipt of the letter of notification and action a Complaint Meeting.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Any complaint regarding the EYFS requirements must be dealt with in 28 days.

Complaints Meeting

The Clerk to the Governors will set up a meeting with a panel appointed by the Governors at a mutually convenient time, as soon as possible and normally within 10 working days of the letter from the complainant being received.

The complainant may choose to attend the meeting accompanied by 'a friend', and where there might be language difficulties by someone able to translate appropriately. Legal representation is not allowed.

The complainant may, on the other hand, not opt to attend but require that the Complaint Panel make all the necessary arrangements for assessing the complaint including conducting any relevant interviews with staff etc.

The Complaint Panel, at the meeting, will consider both the written complaint and the Headmaster's response and will carry out any further investigations/interviews as appropriate.

The Clerk to the Governors will record in writing the Complaint Panel's findings and recommendations and give a copy to the complainant, the Headmaster and, where relevant, the individual about whom the complaint was levelled.

Constitution of the Complaints Panel

The Board of Governors will nominate three individuals to form the Complaint Panel, who should not include any Governors who may be directly involved in the issue. One of the three, under current Independent Schools Standards Regulations (ISSR) guidelines, must be independent of the management and governance of the College. The Vice Chair of the Board of Governors will chair the panel if they have not been directly involved. If the Vice Chair is not available, the Chair will nominate another Governor who has not been involved.

Section 4 Outcomes

The decision of the panel will be final and binding on the College. The Complaint Panel will aim to reach a final decision on the complaint and recommend any appropriate action as quickly as possible, normally within 7 working days.

The findings of the panel will be retained on record whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a Panel Hearing and any information regarding action taken as a result of the Complaint. These are made available on the school premises for referral and inspection.

The full Board of Governors will be informed **by the Chair** that a Complaint Hearing has taken place. The Clerk to the Governors will communicate in writing to the appellant the outcome, stating that, when a complaint is not upheld, there is no right to appeal.

Training

The Deputy Head responsible for staff development will arrange from time-to-time appropriate training in interviewing skills for relevant staff. The Head will remind all staff from time to time of the procedures and records required to be undertaken according to this policy. The Clerk to the Governors will arrange training as necessary, in consultations with the Chair, for members of the Board of Governors who arbitrate on complaints.

Monitoring and Review

The Head is responsible for monitoring the working of the complaints procedures and for refining the application of them in the light of experience.

The Head will review the system annually and can propose changes to the Board of Governors following consultation with the staff and governors.

The Board of Governors is responsible for changes to the policy and procedures.

Section 5 Complaints Record

Complaints Record 2018-19	Senior School	One	Prep School	None
Complaints Record 2019-20	Senior School	One	Prep School	None
Complaints Record 2020-21	Senior School	One	Prep School	One

Section 6 Contact Points for Complaints

The following seeks to provide guidance to which member of staff is best placed to receive concerns and ultimately any formal letter of complaint, so that the issue may be responded to appropriately and as quickly as possible.

Please note: if in any doubt regarding who is the most appropriate person to contact then direct the query, in the case of the Prep School, to the Head of Prep and in the case of the Senior School, the Deputy Head.

Academic Issues

Any academic concern which relates to a specific subject should be directed in the first instance to the student's current subject teacher. Referral beyond this point would be to the relevant Subject Leaders in the Prep School and to the relevant Subject Leaders in the Senior School.

Pastoral Issues

Where concerns relate to the general well-being of the student, they are to be referred to his/her tutor in the first instance.

Referral beyond this point would be to the Deputy Head for matters relating to the Prep and to the Head of Houses in the Senior School

Where the issue centres around academic issues and involves a number of subjects, so progress in general, the matter is to be considered one which needs pastoral intervention and should be referred as follows:

Prep School (including Early Years)

Head of Prep

Mr McCann

Prep Deputy Head

Mr Boland

Senior School

Pastoral Concerns

Mrs Marson (Deputy Head)

Form 1 and New Students

Mr Brown (Form 1 Co-ordinator)

Sixth Form Issues

Mr Waters (Head of Sixth Form)

House Issues

Charles House

Mr Murphy (Head of House)

Guertin House

Ms Treacy (Head of House)

Joseph House

Mr Brown (Head of House)

Martin House

Mr Lowles (Head of House)

McClancy House

Mr Livesey (Head of House)

Stanislaus House

Mrs De Vos (Head of House)

More Specifically - Senior School

Curriculum & Timetabling	Mr Devereux (Assistant Head Curriculum)
Learning Needs	Mrs Dubberley (Head of Learning Needs)
Health and Medical Needs	Miss D Morais (College Nurse)
Pastoral Curriculum	Mrs Marson (Deputy Head)
Extra & Extended Activities	Mr Tatham (Assistant Head)
Catering, Facilities, Grounds, Coaches,	
Health & Safety	Mr Evans (Bursar)
Trips & Visits	Mr Tatham (Assistant Head)
Pastoral & Discipline Matters	Mrs Marson (Deputy Head)

General issues or aspects of Senior School
life not covered by the above Mr Shannon-Little (Interim Headmaster)

More Specifically - Prep School

Curriculum & Timetabling	Mr Boland (Deputy Head)
Learning Needs	Ms Maton (Learning Needs Coordinator)
Health and Medical Needs	Miss D Morais (College Nurse)
Pastoral Curriculum	Mr Batten (PHSE Subject Leader)
Extra & Extended Activities	Mr Turpin (Activities Coordinator)
Catering, Facilities, Grounds, Coaches,	
Health & Safety	Mr Evans (Bursar)
Trips & Visits	Mr Boland (Deputy Head)
Pastoral & Discipline Matters	Mr Boland (Deputy Head)

General issues or aspects of Prep School
life not covered by the above Mr McCann (Head of Prep)

General issues or aspects of College life
not covered by the above Mr Shannon-Little (Interim Headmaster)

Section 7 Further Information

Written records of complaints, and any action taken will be kept for at least 7 calendar years after completion of the complaints procedure and will be available to ISI and Ofsted inspectors on request.

Confidentiality and Access

The correspondence, statements, other materials, and individual records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except in those circumstances where the Secretary of State or an Inspection Team require access in accordance with the 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act.

Section 8 Ofsted and ISI (Independent Schools' Inspectorate)

Parents may make a complaint to OFSTED and/or ISI should they wish to do so – contact details are given below. We would hope however that parents would feel able to address complaints to the College in the first instance.

Contact details for OFSTED

RHS Day Care Registration EY357258

RHS Early Years Provision URN 543433

Address: OFSTED, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7LA

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Telephone: 08546 404040

Contact Details for Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)

Address: ISI, 1st Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

Website: www.isi.net

Email: info@isi.net

References:

Independent School Standards Regulations for Inspection (most current)

Statutory Framework for EYFS 2007

Appendix 1

The structure of the Complaint Meeting will be as follows:

- The Chair of the Complaint Panel will welcome the appellant and the representative(s) of the College.
- The Chair will check that all parties have received and read all previously distributed submissions.
- If significant additional material is presented at the Hearing, then the hearing may be suspended for an appropriate amount of time to give all participants the opportunity to read and understand it.
- The Chair will then invite the appellant to present her or his case
- The College may ask questions
- The Panel may ask questions
- The Chair will then invite the College to present its case
- The appellant may ask questions
- The Panel may ask questions
- The appellant will then sum up his or her case without adding anything new
- The College will then sum up its case without adding anything new
- The appellant and the representatives of the College will then leave the hearing.
- The Panel will then deliberate to reach a decision.