

ST. JOSEPH'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS: PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

The staff and governors at St. Joseph's School are committed to providing a high quality education for your child in a secure and supportive environment. Whilst all concerned strive to achieve their best for the welfare of the pupils at the school, it is appreciated that there may be occasions when you have concerns about your child's education or about particular incidents which have occurred at school. If such a situation arises, we would ask you to follow the procedure outlined below:

GENERAL PROCEDURE FOR CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

The procedure is presented as a series of stages, in a question and answer format.

It is important that you follow through the various stages in the order in which they are given.

1. I am concerned about some aspect of my child's school life. Who should I speak to first?

In the first instance you should always address your concern to the member of staff who has direct responsibility for your child's welfare. At St. Joseph's School this is your child's class teacher. You can contact them to arrange an appointment to discuss your concern when you collect your child at the end of the school day, by telephoning the school, writing a letter or sending a note via your child. It is always best to make contact at an early stage so that any problems can be dealt with before they become major issues, and parents and school can work together to find a satisfactory solution to the problem.

2. I've spoken to the class teacher but the situation hasn't improved. What should I do next?

If you are not satisfied with the response you have received from the class teacher, you need to make an appointment to see the Head Teacher, who has overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school. You can contact the Head Teacher for an appointment either by telephone or in writing. They will listen to your concerns, investigate the matter, and then report back to you. Do bear in mind that the Head Teacher will have many other responsibilities to attend to, and you may have to wait a few days before receiving a response. Obviously, if the matter is urgent, it will be attended to as soon as possible.

3. I've been in to see the Head Teacher, but I'm not satisfied with the response I've received. Is there anyone else I can talk to about the problem?

If you feel that your approach to the Head Teacher has not resolved the issue as far as you are concerned, the next person you can discuss matters with is the Chair of Governors of the school. If you are not sure who this is, you can obtain the name and telephone number of the Chair either directly from the school or by contacting Governor and Management Support at Tameside Council (Tel: 0161 342 3206).

At this stage of the procedure, you will be asked to put your concerns in writing if you have not already done so. The Chair of Governors will not interfere with the Head Teacher's day to day management of the school, but will investigate whether your problem has been dealt with in an appropriate manner and report back to you as soon as possible.

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4. I've spoken to the Chair of Governors, but I'm still not happy. Is there anything more I can do?

You are now reaching the stage where your original concern is turning into a complaint about the way matters have been dealt with by the school. If you wish to pursue this complaint, you have the opportunity of a formal hearing before a Complaints Panel of the Governing Body. Neither the Head Teacher nor the Chair of Governors will be on this panel, which will normally consist of three governors appointed by the Governing Body as a whole.

There are guidelines available about how such a hearing will be conducted, and what you can expect to happen as a result. These guidelines are described in a separate information leaflet, "Guidance for Parents on the Conduct of Governing Body Complaints Panel Hearings", which will be sent to you by the Chair of Governors if your complaint reaches this stage.

5. The Governing Body Complaints Panel have not upheld my complaint. Is there anyone else I can refer the matter to?

The Local Government Ombudsman investigates complaints about "maladministration" i.e. cases where the recognised complaints procedure has not been properly used. However, the Ombudsman cannot investigate complaints about internal school matters and is not empowered to overturn the decision of a Governing Body Complaints Panel which has correctly followed procedures.

If the Ombudsman decides to investigate your complaint, you could wait up to 6 months to hear the result of the investigation. A complaint form can be obtained from your local library or Citizen's Advice Bureau.

If you feel that the Governing Body have acted unreasonably or illegally in coming to their decision, you can complain to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. If you feel this to be necessary, you will need to write to the Secretary of State, who will then investigate your complaint and let you know the result. However, you should be aware that such an investigation can take up to 6 months or more.

Reference to the Local Government Ombudsman or the Secretary of State will only occur under very extreme circumstances.

The vast majority of concerns and complaints will be dealt with by the staff and governors of the school. Please remember that they, like yourself, only want to achieve the best they can for the children in their care.

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OTHER COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

In addition to this general complaints procedure, there are a number of other statutory procedures which relate to specific aspects of the education system. These may need to be followed if you have concerns about the following:

- (a) The school curriculum and related matters.
- (b) Admission of your child to school.
- (c) Exclusion of your child from school.
- (d) The assessment of your child's special educational needs.

If you require more information about any of these procedures, you should contact either the Head Teacher of your child's school or Education Services at Tameside Council.

Most concerns that parents have on a day-to-day basis do not necessarily fit into one of these categories and the general procedure outlined above should therefore be followed. In any case, the general procedure can still be used to deal with concerns which fall within categories (a)-(d) until it becomes clear that recourse to the statutory procedure becomes necessary.

I'm still unsure what to do. Who can I turn to for help?

If you are not sure what to do, or feel you would like some advice on how best to proceed, please contact the Head Teacher of your child's school in the first instance.

If you feel you would like to speak to someone who is not directly involved with the school, you can contact Governor and Management Support at Tameside Council (Tel: 0161 342 2208).