

St John the Baptist’s College

Concerns Procedure Policy

Reviewed: Sept 2023

Reviewed by: Mrs B Leathem

Next Review Date: Sept 2024**CONTENTS**

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7. **FOREWORD**

Here at St John the Baptist’s College, we take concerns very seriously. We have the best interests of all of our pupils and their families at the centre of everything we do. We encourage anyone with a concern to speak to us as soon as possible. If concerns are dealt with at an early stage, then they are more likely to be resolved and this can mitigate unnecessary dissatisfaction.

Many issues can be addressed simply by talking to the relevant staff in school who will be happy to help. Open communication and regular engagement between all stakeholders is vital to the effective management of the school.

We welcome open communication with our staff. You can speak to staff by:

* *Making an appointment to see them by contacting the main office*
* *Phoning the school and asking to speak to a member of staff (if they are teaching or otherwise engaged, they will endeavour to call you back as soon as possible)*
* *Where appropriate, staff can be contacted via email or through the Gateway App and/or Satchel One app*
* *Private message facility is also available to parents via our Facebook Page*

If you have an issue, please talk to your child’s Form Teacher in the first instance or with the relevant Progress Leader or with the Head of Pastoral Care as soon as possible.

Concerns about more serious matters should be raised with the SLT/Principal.

**We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible**

1. **AIMS**

 When dealing with concerns the school will:

* encourage resolution of all concerns as quickly as possible
* provide timely responses to concerns
* keep you informed of progress
* ensure a full and fair investigation of your concern where appropriate
* have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved
* respect confidentiality
* fully address concerns and provide an effective response
* take appropriate action to rectify the issue and prevent it happening again where appropriate
* be responsive to learning from outcomes which will inform and improve practice within the school.

*A copy of this Procedure is available on the school’s website or is available from the school on request.*

1. **CONCERNS PROCEDURE –AT A GLANCE**

**Time Limit**

Please contact the school as soon as possible, unless there are exceptional circumstances, concerns will normally only be considered within 6 months of origin of the concern to the school.

**Stage One**

When making a concern contact the school Principal who will arrange for the concern to be investigated. *If the concern is about the Principal, proceed to Stage Two.*

The school requires concerns to be made in writing, where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process. *(see guidance notes for further information).*

Please provide as much information as possible including;

* name and contact details
* what the concern is about
* what has already been done to try to resolve it
* what you would like the school to do to resolve the concern

The concern will normally be acknowledged within 5 school working days and a response normally made within 20 school working days of receipt of the concern. This response will be issued in writing by the Principal and will indicate with reasons whether the concern has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

***These timeframes may need to be reviewed if concerns are ongoing during school holiday periods.***

If you remain unhappy with the outcome at Stage 1, the concern may be progressed to Stage 2 which is overseen by the Board of Governors.

**Stage Two**

If the concern is unresolved after Stage One, write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors *(care of the school and marked ‘private and confidential’).* Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support the complainant with this process. The Chairperson will convene a committee to review the concern. Please provide as much detail as possible as indicated above.

The concern will normally be acknowledged within 5 school working days and a final response normally made within 20 school working days from the date of receipt of the concern. The response will be issued in writing by the Chairperson of the committee.

***These timeframes may need to be reviewed if concerns are ongoing during school holiday periods.***

**Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)**

If following Stage Two you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your concern, you can refer the matter to the Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

The Ombudsman provides a free, independent and impartial service for handling concerns about schools in Northern Ireland.  You have the right to complain to the Ombudsman if you feel that you have been treated unfairly or have received poor service from a school and your concern has not been resolved to your satisfaction.

A concern should normally be referred to NIPSO within six months of the final response from the school. The school must advise in its concluding letter that the concern may be referred to the NIPSO if you remain dissatisfied.

Contact details for NIPSO are:

**Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman**

Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

Progressive House

33 Wellington Place

Belfast

BT1 6HN

Freepost: FREEPOST NIPSO

Telephone: 02890 233821

Freephone: 0800 34 34 24

Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk

Web: www.nipso.org.uk

1. **SCOPE OF CONCERNS PROCEDURE**

**4.1** The Concerns Procedure sets out how any expression of dissatisfaction relating to the school will be managed. By taking concerns raised seriously at the earliest possible stage, it is hoped that issues can be resolved quickly and effectively.

***Some examples of concerns dealt with;***

* not following school policy
* communication delays / lack of communication
* difficulties in staff / pupil relationships

**4.2 Concerns with separate established procedures**

Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. The Principal/ Chair of Governors will advise on the appropriate procedure to use when the concern is raised.

***Matters may still be referred to NIPSO, if it is felt that maladministration has occurred.***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Exceptions** | **Contact** |
| * Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school
* Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
* School Development Proposals
* Child Protection / Safeguarding

  | Contact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) Director of Operations and Estates Dale HannaContact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) Director of Children and Young People’s Services Dr Clare ManganContact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) Director of Education Michelle HannaContact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) Director of Children and Young People’s Services Dr Clare Mangan  |

**4.3** **The school will not normally investigate anonymous concerns**, unless deemed by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors to be of a serious nature. The decision of whether to deal with such concerns will be at the discretion of the Board of Governors. *(see guidance notes for further information)*

1. **WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE**

**5.1 Your rights as a person making a concern**

In dealing with concern we will ensure;

* fair treatment
* courtesy
* a timely response
* accurate advice
* respect for privacy – concerns will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility of consultation with other appropriate parties about the concern and
* clear reasons for decisions

**5.2 Your responsibilities as a person making a concern**

In making a concern it is important to;

* raise issues in a timely manner
* treat our staff with respect and courtesy
* provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues raised
* use these procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels

**5.3 Rights of parties involved during the investigation**

Where a meeting is arranged the complainant may be accompanied but not represented by another person.

This Procedure does not take away from the statutory rights of any of the participants.

**5.4 Timeframes**

Where concerns are raised with the relevant Teacher or Principal, a response will normally be provided during the meeting or within an agreed timeframe.

**Stage 1** – Normally acknowledge within 5 school working days, response normally within 20 school working days

**Stage 2** – Normally acknowledge within 5 school working days, response normally within 20 school working days

If, for any reason, the review of a concern takes longer to complete, you will be informed of revised time limits and kept updated on progress.

***These timeframes may need to be reviewed if concerns are ongoing during school holiday periods.***

1. **MAKING A CONCERN**

**6.1 Equality**

The school requires concerns to be made in writing. Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support the complainant with this process.

**6.2 Unreasonable Concerns**

The school is committed to dealing with all concerns fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain.

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the Concerns Procedure having been completed and the concern having been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If they try to re-open the same issue, the Chair of Governors will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant repeatedly continues to contact the school with the same issue it may choose not to respond.