



## ST PAUL'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY

### Complaints Procedure (Based on Portsmouth School Complaints Procedure 2016)

#### *Our Mission Statement*

*"Do everything with love."*

*(St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 16:14)*

*This means that we will...*

- *Show our love for Jesus in everything we say and do*
- *Respect everyone by recognising that God made us all different but equally valued.*
- *Strive for excellence and find ways to share, develop and celebrate our talents.*
- *Promote a safe, happy and enjoyable environment.*
- *Actively support our school, parish and the wider community.*

Ratified on

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Review date \_\_\_\_\_

The Governors of St Paul's Catholic Primary School are committed to ensuring that the highest standards are maintained at the school both in the provision of education to pupils and in every other aspect of the running of the school. A complaints procedure is an important part of the management of a well-run school allowing parents and others the opportunity to voice any concerns they may have through appropriate channels. This policy explains the procedure which has been adopted by the governing body to ensure a timely, systematic and fair approach to the resolution of such concerns.

We recognise the need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage reduces the numbers that develop into formal complaints. We aim to ensure that concerns are handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. Our formal complaints procedure is only necessary if efforts to resolve the concern informally are unsuccessful. In most cases, a class teacher or an individual delivering the service will receive the first approach. Our staff development process includes training to help staff resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

#### Aims of this policy

- To support positive relationships between our school, families and the wider community
- To take account of the views of parents and community
- To ensure that complaints and concerns are managed fairly and openly within the structure of the policy
- To address all points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate resolution, where necessary
- To protect all sides of a dispute by providing a fair and impartial hearing

In order to investigate your complaint as fully as possible the Governing Board of St Paul's Catholic Primary School and Nursery have implemented a staged approach.

#### **Stage 1: The first contact**

- 1.1. Parents are always welcome to discuss any concerns with the appropriate member of staff, who will clarify with the parent the nature of the concern and reassure them that the school wants to hear about it. The member of staff may explain to the parent how the situation happened. It can be helpful at this point to identify what sort of outcome the parent is looking for.
- 1.2. If the member of staff first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter, s/he will make a clear note of the date, name and contact address or phone number.
- 1.3. All members of staff will know how to refer, if necessary, to the person with responsibility for the particular issue raised by the parent. S/he will check later to make sure the referral has been dealt with.
- 1.4. If the matter is brought to the attention of the Head of School s/he may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage; if the complaint is against the Head of School the parent will be advised to contact the Chair of the Governing Board.
- 1.5. The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure the parent is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting it in writing if appropriate.
- 1.6. Where no satisfactory solution has been found within ten days, parents will be advised that if they wish their concern to be considered further they should write to the Head of School and complete complaints form (Annex 2).

## **Stage 2: Referral to the Head of School for investigation**

- 2.1 The Head of School (or designated person) will acknowledge the complaint in writing within three working days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be within ten working days. If this proves impossible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.
- 2.2 The Head of School will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet them to supplement any information provided previously. It will be made clear to the complainant that if s/he wishes s/he might be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative or advocate who can speak on his/her behalf.
- 2.3 If necessary the Head of School will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed. Pupils should normally be interviewed with parents/guardians present, but if this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious/urgent complaint or if the pupil has specifically said that s/he would prefer that parents/guardians were not involved, another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should be present. If a member of staff is complained against, they must have the opportunity to present their case (see General Principles).
- 2.4 The Head of School will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
- 2.5 Once all the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, the Head of School will then produce a written response to the complainant, including a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this will include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant will be advised that should s/he wish to take the complaint further s/he should notify the Chair of Governors within five weeks of receiving the letter.
- 2.6 If the complaint is against the Head of School, or if the Head of School has been closely involved at Stage 1, the Chair of the Governing Board will carry out all the Stage 2 procedures
- 2.7 The Head of School will keep Executive Headteacher informed

## **Stage 3: Review by the Governing Board**

- 3.1 The Chair of the Governing Board will write to the complainant via the Clerk to acknowledge receipt of the written request for the Governing Board to review the complaint. The acknowledgement will inform the complainant that three members of the school's Governing Board will hear the complaint within twenty days of receiving the complaint. The letter will also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. These must be received by the Clerk seven working days in advance of the hearing for the documents to be sent to the three members.
- 3.2 A meeting of the Governors' Complaints Panel will be convened. No governors with prior involvement must be included on the panel and it may be necessary to use reserves (previously agreed by the Governing Board) to ensure the Panel can meet within the set time. If s/he has not previously been involved the Chair should chair the Panel; otherwise the Vice-Chair should do so. Governors should bear in mind the advantages of having a parent governor on the panel, and will also want to be sensitive to issues of race and gender. It is not appropriate for the Head of School to sit on the Panel.
- 3.3 The Chair/Vice-Chair will ensure the Panel hears the complaint within twenty working days of receiving the letter. All relevant correspondence relating to the complaint will be given to each Panel member as soon as the composition of the

panel is confirmed. If the correspondence is extensive, the Chair may prepare a thorough summary for sending to Panel members.

- 3.4 The Chair or clerk will write and inform the complainant, Head of School, any relevant witnesses and members of the Panel at least five working days in advance of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification will also inform the complainant of his/her right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/advocate/interpreter and explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the Panel.
- 3.5 The Head of School will be invited to attend the Panel meeting and will be asked to prepare a written report for the Panel in response to the complaint. All concerned should receive any relevant documents including the Head of School's report, including the complainant, at least five working days prior to the meeting. The Head of School may also invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to respond in writing or person, subject to the discretion of the Chair.
- 3.6 The meeting should allow for:
  - The complainant to explain their complaint and the Head of School to explain the school's response
  - The Head of School to question the complainant about the complaint and the complainant to question the Head of School and/or other members of staff about the school's response
  - Panel members to have an opportunity to question both the complainant and the Head of School
  - Any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to approval of the Chair) and all parties having the right to question all the witnesses
  - Final statements by both the complainant and the Head of School.

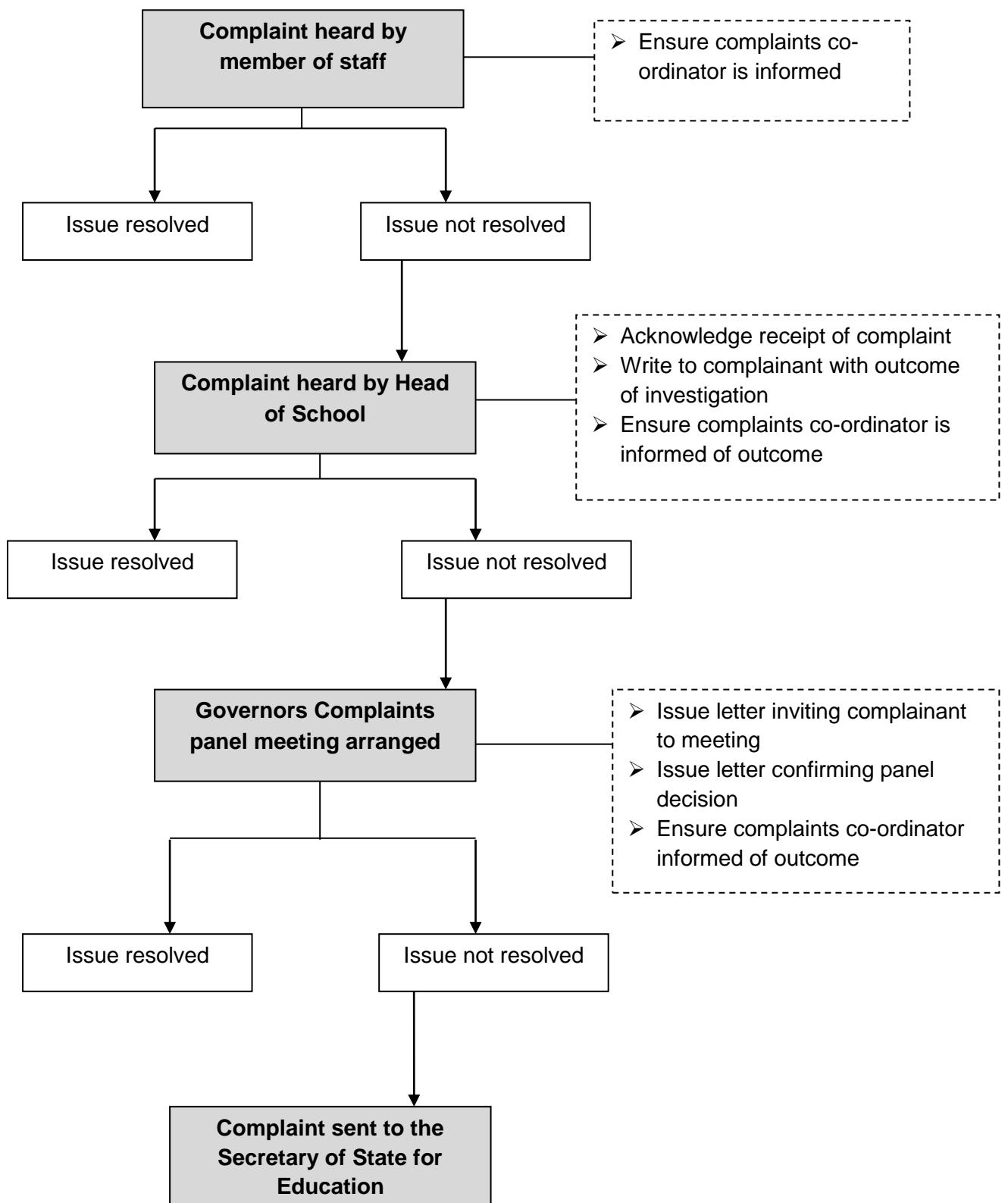
It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Panel to ensure that it is properly minuted.

- 3.7 The Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and Head of School that the Panel will consider its decision and that a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days. The complainant, Head of School, other members of staff and witnesses will then leave.
- 3.8 The Panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and
  - Reach a unanimous, or at least a majority decision on the complaint;
  - Decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint; and
  - Where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.
- 3.9 A written statement outlining the decision of the Panel must be sent to the complainant and Head of School. The letter to the complainant should also explain whether a further appeal can be made, and if so, to whom.
- 3.10 The school should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the school's records. These records should be kept separately from the pupil's personal records.

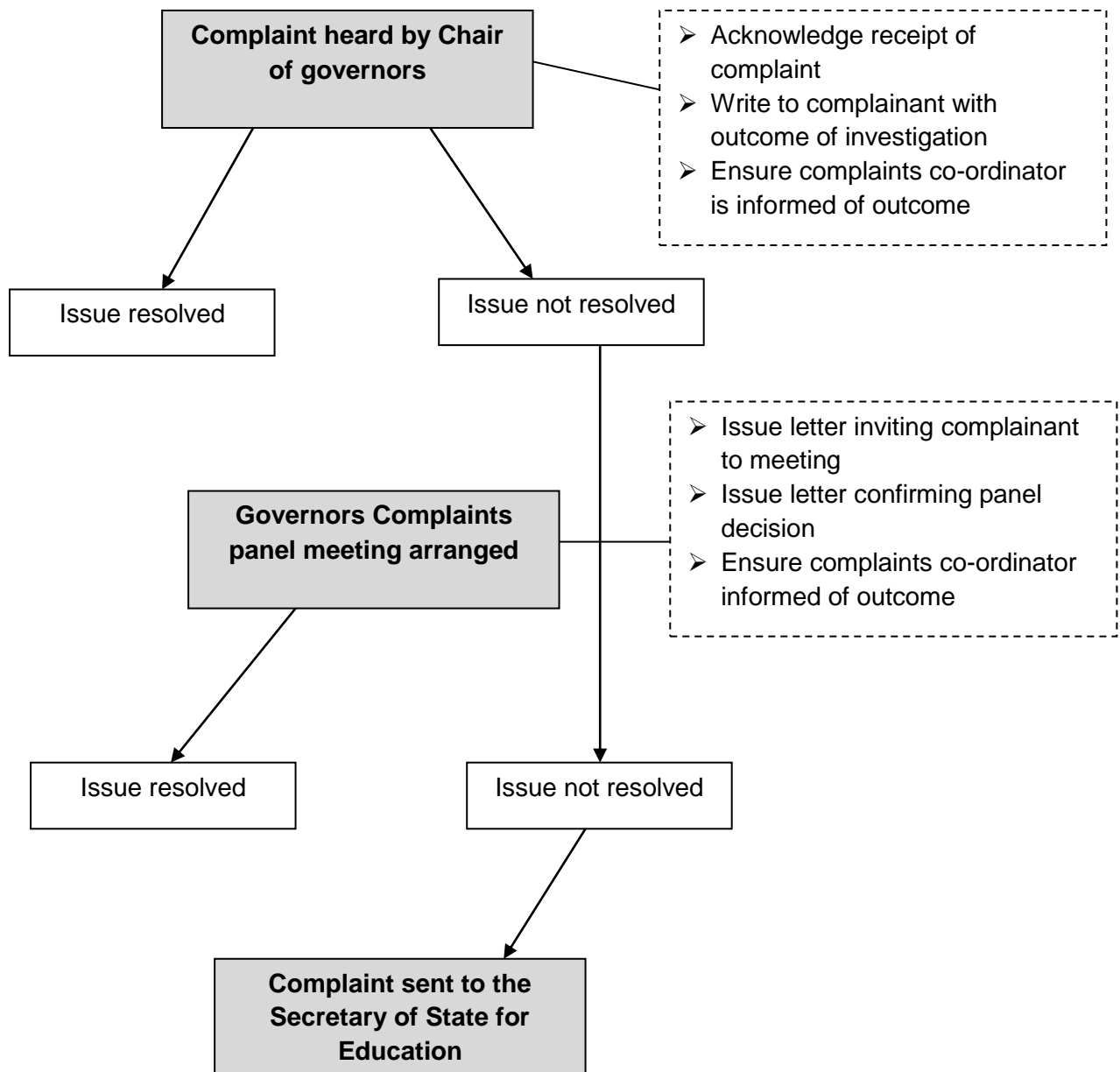
### **Further Action**

Complaints about school problems are almost always settled within schools but in exceptional cases it may be possible to refer the problem to an outside board such as the Secretary of State for Education.

Flowchart of complaints about school (excluding Head of School)



# Flowchart of complaints about a Head of School



Please complete and return to St Paul's School. An acknowledgement will be sent with an explanation of what action will be taken

Your name	
Child's name	
Your relationship to child	
Address	
Daytime telephone number	
Evening telephone number	
Please give details of your complaint	
What actions, if any have you taken to try to resolve your complaint (who did you speak to and what was the response)?	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem?	
Are you attaching any paperwork?	
Signature	
Date	
<i>For Office use only</i>	
Date acknowledgement sent	By whom
Complaint referred to:	Date:

### Guidance for complainants

If you are not satisfied with the response given to your complaint in the Head of School letter, you will be invited by the Chair of Governors to attend a Panel Complaints Meeting at the school. You may bring a partner or friend to the meeting. It is ESSENTIAL that you bring the Head of School letter to the meeting. The report will have been sent to you by recorded mail.

### Composition of the complaints panel

A panel comprising 3 school governors will hear your complaint. In addition the Clerk to the Governors will be present to minute the meeting.

### Meeting procedure

1. You will be asked to explain your complaint to the panel and your response to the Headteacher letter
2. You will be asked to say how you think your complaint may be resolved
3. The Head of School will then be invited to attend the meeting and will be given the opportunity to explain their response to your complaint
4. At this point you will have the opportunity to question the Head of School and any other member of the staff directly involved in your complaint
5. Following this the Head of School may take the opportunity to question you
6. The panel of governors will then question both you and the Head of School/staff member
7. Finally the Chair of the Panel of Governors will consider its decision and explain that a written decision will be sent to both you and the Head of School within 15 working days
8. This decision will be posted by recorded mail. It is ESSENTIAL that you inform the school as soon as possible if you do not receive the Chair of Panel's decision within 15 working day.