



# Saint Vincent de Paul Complaints Procedure *September 2018*



## Ethos

Saint Vincent de Paul Primary School is proud of its Catholic ethos. The school community of Saint Vincent de Paul is committed to the provision of an inclusive, secure and stimulating learning environment where children are highly valued and placed clearly at the centre of school life. This is clearly captured in our ethos statement supported by our school aims.

## Our Mission Statement

Saint Vincent de Paul Primary School is committed to working in partnership with our parents to ensure the development of each child's full potential in a climate of support, joy, challenge, co operation and celebration.

We value the realisation that every child born into the world is a new thought of God, an ever fresh and radiant possibility. We are an inclusive school where all are respected and cherished as individuals.





Here at Saint Vincent de Paul, we take complaints very seriously. We have the best interests of all our pupils and their families at the centre of all we do. In this regard, we encourage anyone with a concern to speak to us as soon as possible. If issues are dealt with at an early stage, then they are more likely to be resolved and there is no 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 the school, parents/carers and other stakeholders is vital to the effective management of the school.

We welcome open communication with our staff; parents / carers can speak to staff by:

**Contacting Mrs Hill in the school office on 02890 717920 to make an appointment**

**If you have any issues please talk to the Class Teacher as soon as possible. Any issues about matters other than the classroom should be raised with the Principal. We take all issues seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.**



## Parents Complaints Procedure



Please speak to your child's Class Teacher in the first instance to raise any issue and to seek resolutions

If you are not able to resolve the issue, or if you have an issue regarding the Class Teacher, please speak to Mrs McVeigh, the School Principal

If you are not able to resolve the issue, you may raise a complaint through the School Complaints procedure

*The School Complaints Procedure is available on the School website: **[www.stvincentdepaulps.com](http://www.stvincentdepaulps.com)**  
Or from the School on request*

## **Aims**

When dealing with complaints the school aims to:

- Encourage resolution as quickly as possible;
- Provide timely responses;
- Keep complainants informed of progress;
- Ensure a full and fair investigation of your complaint where appropriate;
- Have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved;
- Respect confidentiality;
- Fully address complaints and provide an effective response;
- Take appropriate action to rectify the issue and prevent it happening again;
- Be responsive to learning from outcomes which will inform and improve practice within the school.

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Or from the School on request***

## Complaints Procedure

### Stage One

Write to Mrs McVeigh  
School Principal

### Stage Two

Write to Father Devlin  
the Chairperson of Board  
of Governors

### **Time Limit**

To enable complaints to be resolved, please contact the school as soon as possible. Unless there are *exceptional circumstances*, complaints will normally only be considered within 6 months of origin.

### **Stage One**

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

**Please provide clear information and include the following:**

- **Your name and contact details**
- **What your complaint is about - please try to be specific**
- **What you have already done to try to resolve it and**
- **What you would like the school to do to resolve your complaint**

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 10 school working days. This will be a short response and you will be sent a copy of the school's complaints procedure. A final response will normally be made within 20 school working days of receipt of the complaint. This response will be issued in writing by the Principal and will indicate with

reasons whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

***Please note these timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.***

If you, (the complainant) remain unhappy with the outcome at Stage 1, the complaint may be progressed to Stage 2 which is overseen by the board of governors.

## **Stage Two**

If the complaint is unresolved after Stage One, write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors. The letter can be left at the school office 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 sub-committee to review the complaint.

In the case of the complaint being against the principal, the sub-committee will investigate the complaint.

Please provide clear information and include the following:

- Reason(s) why you disagree with the stage one findings
- Any aspect in which you think that the school's complaints procedure was not fully followed

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 10 school working days and a final response normally made within 20 school working days from date of receipt. The response will be issued by the Chairperson of the sub-committee and will indicate with reasons whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

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

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

If following Stage Two you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, 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 complaints 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 a poor service from a school and your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction.

A complaint 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 complaint 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](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)

Web: [www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk)

## SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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

### ***Some examples of complaints dealt with:***

- Not following school policy
- Communication delays / lack of communication
- Difficulties in staff / pupil relationships

**This procedure should not be used for complaints with separate established procedures, however if your complaint relates to the school's failure to correctly administer any of these procedures, then you may complain by means of this procedure.**

Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms, which are not part of the schools complaints procedure, are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. The Principal/ Chair of Governors will advise on the appropriate procedure to use when a complaint is raised.

Exceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school</li><li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)</li><li>• School Development Proposals</li><li>• Child Protection / Safeguarding</li></ul>

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints, unless deemed by the chairperson of the board of governors to be of a very serious nature. The decision of dealing with such complaints will be at the discretion of the board of governors.

## **What To Expect Under This Procedure**

### **Your rights as a person making a complaint**

In dealing with complaints we will ensure:

- **Fair treatment;**
- **Courtesy;**
- **A timely response;**
- **Accurate advice;**
- **Respect for privacy - complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility of consultation with other appropriate parties about the complaint; and**
- **Clear reasons for decisions.**

### **Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint**

- When making a complaint it is important that you:
- 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

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

Where a meeting is arranged parties may be accompanied by another person.

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

## **Timeframes**

When issues 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 10 school working days, response normally within 20 school working days

**Stage 2** - Normally acknowledge within 10 school working days, response normally within 20 school working days

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

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

## **Equality**

The school requires complaints 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.

## **Unreasonable Complaints**

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

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been completed and the complaint has been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied.

The school must balance the rights of an individual to make a complaint and have it fairly investigated with the rights of staff not to be subjected to unacceptable actions or behaviour. Any decision to treat a complainant as unreasonable must take into account the need to ensure that the complaints procedure is being fairly applied and every attempt has been made to communicate and address concerns about behaviour/conduct with the complainant.

**Drafted: September 2018**

**Agreed:**

**Signed: Very Reverend Father Patrick Devlin**

**Date:**

