



ST ALOYSIUS' COLLEGE

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. The College communicates with parents in many different ways in the course of its work. This policy outlines how the college deals with concerns and complaints. Concerns and complaints can come from parents, pupils, staff and members of the public. This policy sets out how the College will deal with both concerns and complaints. It acknowledges that in most cases parents will be the complainants and this policy is written with this in mind. In the event of a concern or complaint being raised by a pupil or the public the same procedures will be followed.
2. Every so often situations arise where something has, or seems to have, gone wrong. The College welcomes parents' communication when things have gone awry and is committed to sorting them out to everyone's satisfaction. We are not too proud to make an apology when one is due. Successful education relies on positive and co-operative relations between home and school and the manner in which problems are resolved makes all the difference.

Before a concern becomes a complaint

3. Do not hesitate to contact the College if you are uneasy or dissatisfied about something. It is important not to let little concerns build up into serious mistrust or irritation. We are keen to see things run smoothly as you are - after all, we all want the best for the children.
4. When you contact the College begin as informally as possible - say what concerns you and try to find out the facts. You will be in a much better position to know if you have grounds for a complaint when you are in possession of all the facts. We may be able to give an explanation or fill in details which answer your concerns. Do not rely solely on your child's account or on information from other parents.
5. A 'phone call is better than a letter, and a temperate letter is better than an ultimatum or threat of action. We welcome 'phone calls from parents who wish to talk about a problem before it becomes a complaint.

The College's expectation of parents

6. The College seeks to build a partnership with parents in the education of their children. This Concerns and Complaints Policy sets out how the College will deal with your concerns. We would ask that, for your part, you . . .
 1. things are often not entirely the way they are reported (by children or by other parents); children very much see things from their own point of view and important elements, circumstances and nuances of the story are often omitted in the version told to parents; it is always as well to find out the full story
 2. children in school can be very different people from the way they are at home - sometimes for better and sometimes for worse
 3. trust the College to resolve matters according to the aims and methods stated in this policy
 4. seek information from the College where you need it
 5. consider what the College has to say
 6. disclose full and frank information which would help the College to resolve situations with integrity and justice
 7. take seriously and report without delay any concerns or suspicions of bullying
 8. do not involve your child inappropriately when you raise your concern or complaint - it is important that the child sees parents and the College working together to resolve differences or difficulties; the child should not be placed in a position where s/he appears impertinent, insolent, disobedient or acts inappropriately; remember that directly countermanding a teacher's instruction or requirement is likely to make matters worse and bring confrontation rather than resolution.

What you can expect of the College

7. If you write, e-mail or leave a message, you can usually expect the College to get back to you within 48-hours (during the school week in term time) - this may not be a full response but will let you know that your complaint has been received and is being dealt with.
8. You can expect staff to be friendly, courteous and supportive.
9. You can expect staff to be professional. This may sometimes mean we do not agree with you and must put forward a view or make a decision that you may not like - but we will always explain our reasons.
10. Your child will be involved only if the concern directly and personally concerns them. Parents are sometimes worried that if they raise a concern there will be adverse consequences for their child. The College is firmly committed to ensuring that this is never the case.
11. You can expect a face-to-face meeting at a reasonable time and usually within five school days if you request it.

12. You can expect members of staff to treat the concern with appropriate confidentiality. Notes of any concern raised will be kept on file.

Contacting the College

13. Your first line of approach is your child's Head of Year (in the Senior School) or Junior School Depute
14. These senior members of staff are the people who have immediate and overall responsibility for your child's pastoral care, discipline and involvement in school life. In most cases it is they who will be best informed about your child and will be best placed to resolve concerns.
15. Parents are asked not to contact individual class or subject teachers directly.
16. It may be tempting to "go straight to the top" but putting the concern to the Head Master often escalates something that could have been better resolved by other senior members of staff. You can expect members of staff to treat the concern with appropriate confidentiality. Notes of any concern raised will be kept on file.

A concern becomes a complaint

17. If you believe that your concern has not been resolved, the matter may become a complaint. A complaint is a more formal matter and it is important that complainants are clear in their mind that they are raising the concern into a complaint. Complaints should be in writing and addressed to the Head Master. The Head Master's PA will keep a file of all complaints which will be formally logged by a member of the College Leadership team.
18. The Head Master will ensure that every complaint is investigated and will appoint a senior member of staff who is not involved in the matter to investigate. If appropriate the investigation will be conducted by the Head Master.
19. Complaints will be dealt with timeously and usually within 10 working school days. You may be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint as part of the investigation. The Head Master will communicate the decision to you in writing or may ask the senior member of staff to do so on his behalf. If you believe that your complaint has not been resolved you may take the matter to the Governors.

Appealing to the Governors

20. A written complaint should be made by you through the Clerk to the Governors to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will appoint another Governor to investigate the Complaint, who will then intimate the Decision to you in writing. If you believe that your complaint has not been resolved you may take the matter to an Appeal Panel.
21. If you consider your Complaint has not been resolved, a written Appeal, with your full accompanying Reasons, must be lodged by you, within 14 calendar days of the date of intimation of the Decision, requesting the matter be further considered by an independent Appeal Panel. Your written Appeal, with your full accompanying Reasons, should be addressed to the Chair of the Governors and sent c/o the Clerk to the Governors, St Aloysius' College.

22. The Appeal Panel will consist of three Governors, one of whom will chair the Panel. Any Governor involved previously in the investigation shall not form part of the Appeal Panel. The Chairman of Governors, or another selected Governor, shall appoint the Appeal Panel.
23. You will be invited to a meeting with the Appeal Panel. Both you and the College may submit any additional papers about the complaint to be read by the Appeal Panel in advance of the meeting.
24. The procedure adopted for the Appeal Panel will be decided upon by the Chairman of the Appeal Panel. The Head Master and a member of staff with direct knowledge of the child or issues before the panel will be invited to attend and speak. You will also be invited to speak.
25. The purpose of the Appeal Panel is to consider the complaint impartially and reach a final decision. The Appeal Panel will communicate their decision to you in writing. The decision of the Appeal Panel shall be final.

Support

26. At any stage of the complaints procedure, you are welcome to bring with you a supportive friend who is not involved in the complaint.
27. Within the complaints procedure it is not appropriate for the College to engage in meetings to which parents bring legal representatives or advisors (including where the supportive friend is also a lawyer).
28. The College will not generally enter into correspondence with solicitors or others in place of direct communication with parents.

Vexatious and Frivolous Complaints/Unacceptable behaviour in respect of complaints

29. We cannot investigate complaints which may be considered in our view to be vexatious or frivolous. We will also be unable to continue with the investigation or conclusion of a complaint which has already commenced, regardless of the stage of this policy which has been reached, where it may be considered in our view to have become vexatious or frivolous. There are a number of factors which might determine this including but not exhaustively:
 - Changes to the nature of the complaint as the investigation proceeds, whether apparently to prolong engagement with us or otherwise
 - A failure to identify clearly the substance or precise issues which require to be addressed or the outcome sought by raising the complaint
 - Where the complainant makes excessive contact or unreasonable demands on us or others, whilst the complaint is being dealt with
 - Where the complainant demonstrates what we consider to be abusive behaviour or threats
 - Persistence in pursuing a complaint where the formal process has been followed, implemented and exhausted whether by changing the basis of the complaint or otherwise
 - Failure or refusal by the complainant to co-operate with this policy or progress the complaint to the next stage
 - Where the complainant raises new minor issues following a formal process in relation to a previous complaint having been exhausted, whether as part of a “tit for tat” or otherwise
 - Where the complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome
30. We recognise that some complainants will not or cannot accept a decision in respect of their complaint and whilst their approach may be reasonable their persistent behaviour is not. Therefore once the process is exhausted, the College will consider the matter closed and make no further comment to the complainant.

31. College staff are entitled to the same courtesy as we would hope to extend to any complainant and therefore verbal or physical threats are likely to bring to an end the process and all direct contact.
32. The use of social media networks is covered by this policy and the College will refer any threats or inappropriate comments or abusive remarks made through such networks about its staff to Police Scotland.
33. We will not deal with correspondence of any kind that is abusive to staff or defamatory about the College. We would advise the complainant that this is unnecessary and unhelpful and invite them to restate their complaint in a more temperate manner. Likewise we will politely end any telephone calls which are considered aggressive, abusive or offensive. Staff members have the right to make this decision and inform the caller that their behaviour is unacceptable.

Time limitation of right to lodge a complaint

34. The College aims to respond timeously to all complaints and investigate matters raised fully and fairly. Complaints made some time after the events giving rise to concerns can be very difficult to investigate. Therefore the College will not consider complaints which are made longer than three months after the event to which they relate.
35. Once a complaint has been investigated and the process exhausted it is not possible for the substance of the matter to be revisited in the guise of another complaint.
36. There is no time limitation on concerns or complaints related to matters of safeguarding/child protection.

Admissions

37. There is no right of appeal against non-admission.

Appeal against Sanctions Issued

38. Senior School pupils who feel unfairly treated or wrongly punished may appeal against the punishment. It is important, however, that the appeal procedure is observed both by pupils and by their parents:
 1. In the first instance, it should be the pupil who appeals (not the parents).
 2. Before appealing, the pupil should speak calmly and courteously to the teacher concerned, explaining his or her point of view and asking the teacher to reconsider the matter.
 3. If the teacher declines to change his/her mind, the pupil should then appeal to his or her Head of Year.
 4. Appeals are to be made to the Head of Year within 24-hours of the punishment being given.
 5. Heads of Year will consult the teacher who gave the punishment before making a decision on the appeal. Appeals are not intended to undermine teachers' authority but to ensure just and proportionate treatment for all.
 6. If the punishment is upheld by the Head of Year, the pupil will usually have to do it. Parents are asked to intervene only rarely and if they are absolutely sure there has been a serious miscarriage of justice. They should contact the Assistant Head (Pastoral) or the Senior Depute or in the case of the Junior school, the Junior School Depute (Pastoral).

7. If a pupil refuses to accept the punishment, or if parents refuse to allow their child to be punished, the pupil will be suspended. If a punishment is rescinded the Head of Year must inform the Assistant Head (Pastoral) or Senior Depute. If a pupil exhibits an inappropriate or insolent attitude towards a teacher subsequent to a successful appeal, s/he is to be reported immediately to the Head of Year. In such circumstances a pupil could expect to have the original punishment re-imposed together with further sanctions.

Suspension & Expulsion

39. The decision to suspend a pupil is taken by the Senior Depute, the Assistant Head (Pastoral) or the Junior School Depute (Pastoral). An appeal against suspension is heard by the Head Master.
40. For a suspension in excess of 5 school days, that has been upheld by the Head Master, parents have a right of appeal to the Governors as outlined in paras 20-25 of this policy.
41. The decision to expel a pupil is taken by the Head Master. Parents have a right of appeal to the Governors as outlined in paras 20-25 of this policy.

Anonymous complaints

42. Anonymous complaints are unhelpful and will not usually be acted upon, unless there is a child protection concern.

Complaints about Kindergarten and After Care

43. If you have a complaint about Kindergarten and After Care which has not been resolved by the College's own complaints procedures, you may wish to contact the Care Commission which regulates the provision of pre-school care in Scotland.

Policy Owner: Patrick Doyle, Head Teacher

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