****

**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE AND POLICY**

**January 2018**

**COMPLAINTS POLICY**

The St Malachy’s College complaints policy reflects the College ethos and is intended to establish clear mechanisms for the resolution of complaints.

**Aims**

In operating this Complaints Procedure, we aim to:

* encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
* fully address all aspects of a complaint within set timescales and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
* provide an efficient, robust system through which issues are addressed effectively
* provide a simple, speedy and accessible service that respects confidentiality
* have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved;

Where it becomes evident at an early stage that a matter should be dealt with according to other established procedures or appeals mechanisms, this Complaints Procedure will be set aside in favour of the agreed procedure such as Child Protection, Special Education, Admissions, Suspensions and Expulsions, Behaviour Management and Anti-Bullying. We do not deal with anonymous complaints and these procedures do not provide for resolution of anonymous complaints.

**Rights and Responsibilities**

In dealing with a complaint we will ensure that you receive a timely response, fair treatment, courtesy, accurate information, respect for your privacy (complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility that we may have to consult with other appropriate parties about your complaint) and reasons for our decisions.

In raising complaints, we expect that you will raise issues in a timely manner, treat staff as professionals in a non-threatening way and with courtesy, provide accurate and concise information and follow these procedures fully at the appropriate levels.

**Making a Complaint/Seeking Redress**

**Stage 1: Informal**

In the first instance a complaint, concern or issue for redress should normally be referred verbally to the Form Tutor with the initial action or decision against which you wish to complain, so that they may be allowed to address the matter. The Form Tutor may refer your concern to the Head of Year or Head of School.

You should observe the College’s arrangements for making any appointments. We will endeavour to arrange an appointment within a working week.

**Stage 2: Informal (A)**

If your complaint remains unresolved you should contact one of the Vice Principals. If your concern is regarding a curriculum issue, you should contact the Curriculum Vice Principal and if your concern is a pastoral matter, you should contact the Pastoral Vice Principal.

**Stage 2: Informal (B)**

If your complaint still remains unresolved, or is with the principal, you should arrange a meeting with the principal to discuss the matter.

If the principal requires further time to investigate or deal effectively with the issue, he will inform you of this.

**Stage 3: Formal**

If your complaint is not resolved in the informal manner, you should then write to the principal. Your written grievance should be as concise as possible and address specifically the issues that are of immediate concern to you.

You will receive written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. Where possible, this confirmation will also provide a response to the issues raised or otherwise indicate that your concerns are being fully investigated and a timeframe – expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 20 working days from the date on which your letter was received) - by which the matter will be resolved.

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

**Stage 4: Formal**

If you still believe that your complaint or grievance has not been dealt with in a satisfactory manner or feel that the decision by the principal is unsatisfactory, you may write to The Chairperson of the Board of Governors. The Chairperson will bring your complaint to a Governors’ Sub-Committee which will investigate and respond to your grievance. Your written grievance should be as concise as possible and address specifically the issues that are of immediate concern to you.

You will receive written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. Where possible, this confirmation will also provide a response to the issues raised or otherwise indicate that your concerns are being fully investigated and a timeframe – (normally a maximum of 20 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received) - by which the matter will be resolved. Alternatively, the response may arrange for you to attend a meeting with the sub-committee at which your concerns may be discussed in full. If required, such a meeting will take place within 20 working days of receipt of your written complaint to the Chairperson and you should expect a written response within a further 10 working days of the meeting being held.

**Stage 5 - Appeals Process**

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors, you may appeal the decision to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

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

If following Stage 5 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 you have been treated unfairly or have received a poor service form a school and your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction.

A complaint should normally be made to NIPSO within six months of the final response from the College.

Contact details for NIPSO

**Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman,**Progressive House33 Wellington Place,
Belfast, BT1 6HN

* Telephone: 02890 233821
* Text Phone: 02890 897789
* Freephone: 0800 34 34 24
* Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk
* Freepost: Freepost NIPSO

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Governors in accordance with any new guidelines from or statutory requirements.

Date policy agreed by Board of Governors ………………………………………….………

Signed Principal: ……………………………………………. Date: ……….………………

Signed Chair of Governors: ……………………………… Date: ………………………

Date for review of policy: ...……………………………………….…….…………………