



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Reviewed January 2015

Mission Statement

As a Catholic Sixth Form College we strive to be a centre of educational excellence for the community built on faith, respect and trust. We celebrate diversity amongst all our students and staff and seek to nurture the gifts of each individual through high quality teaching and learning and dedicated pastoral care.

Values Statement

Cardinal Newman College is a community which aims to live out the gospel values of service and love. This means that:

- The individual student is central to all our endeavours
- The College values each individual as a unique person and regards each person, made in the image and likeness of God, as worthy of the utmost respect
- The College strives to develop each person intellectually, socially and spiritually through an inclusive programme of study and enrichment
- The College values the spiritual journey of each individual and will offer opportunities for each to engage appropriately in their spiritual search
- The College is committed to creating a culture that is open and welcoming, free from fear and from violence of any kind, in which all individuals feel safe, happy and secure
- The College provides learning environments that are stimulating, enjoyable and challenging to students, fostering their creativity, imagination and search for truth
- The College encourages individuals to contribute positively to the world in which they live, to challenge injustice and to seek out more co-operative, just and peaceful forms of human existence

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1. PURPOSE AND AIMS OF THE PROCEDURE

Effective procedures to deal with complaints are an important part of Cardinal Newman College's commitment to quality services to the individual as outlined in the Mission and Values Statement.

The purpose of this procedure is:

- To provide a framework within which departments can base their own internal procedures
- To set out a common appeals process when a complaint cannot be resolved to the student's satisfaction in the first instance.
- To promote good practice in the handling of complaints

The aims of the procedure are to ensure that:

- It is as simple and straightforward as possible to make a complaint
- That the complaint is being treated seriously and in a courteous and efficient manner
- The complainant is kept informed of the progress of the complaint investigation
- The complainant is advised how to take a complaint further if they remain dissatisfied
- College staff recognise that complaints are an important and positive means of learning how to improve the quality of services provided

Use of the procedure does not affect a person's right to refer a complaint externally. This may be appropriate when the complaints procedure has been exhausted.

2. DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

A complaint can be an expression of dissatisfaction about such matters as:

- An unsatisfactory level or quality of service
- The delivery, or non-delivery, of curriculum
- A failure to provide information or give correct information
- A failure to follow the College's agreed policies and procedures
- The absence of proper procedures
- The behaviour of members of staff or contractors employed by the College
- A failure to consider all relevant information in coming to a decision

Complaints can be made by anyone receiving or seeking a service from the College. A person may make a complaint on behalf of someone else but only with that person's written consent.

3. THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

There are two stages to the procedure:

Informal complaints should be resolved quickly and informally. All complaints should be logged by a member of staff and passed to Principalship.

Where complaints cannot be resolved straightaway, or where a person is still dissatisfied following an informal complaint, these will be formally investigated through the College's complaints procedure and a response made in writing.

If they continue to be dissatisfied following the Formal procedure, an appeal for further independent investigation will be considered and, when appropriate, will be carried out by the Principal.

All complaints (informal or formal) must be forwarded to Principalship.

The Informal Complaint

The complainant should be advised that further enquiries will be carried out and a response made as soon as possible. Any member of staff receiving an informal complaint should log it and pass it to Principalship.

Anyone making an informal complaint should be advised of their right to make a formal complaint if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the College's initial investigations.

The Formal Complaint

Complaints will need to be made in writing and will be formally investigated:

- When an informal complaint cannot be resolved
- As a result of their continued dissatisfaction after Informal procedure investigations
- All written complaints

A formal complaint will be recorded by Principalship and forwarded to the appropriate member of staff. They will:

- Acknowledge the complaint by letter or in person
- Record details of the complaint and ensure that it is progressed within set timescales

Formal complaints should be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days of their receipt.

Any responses to requests for information should be returned to the appropriate member of staff within 5 working days.

A reply will be within 20 working days of the receipt of the complaint, giving a full response to the issues raised.

If the complaint is a complex one and a full response is not possible within the 20 day deadline, the complainant will be sent a letter within this timescale informing them of the delay, the reasons for this and an anticipated response date.

The manager involved should ensure that the formal response clearly represents the views of the College.

The complainant should also be advised that if she/he is still not satisfied with the response, then she/he can request an appeal to the Principal.

The Appeal

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved within College. There will however be some instances whereby the complainant is still dissatisfied and consider, for example, that they have not received an adequate response, or that they have been treated unfairly. The request for an appeal should be made to the Principal.

The Principal will acknowledge this appeal request within 5 working days.

On receipt of the appeal request the Principal will determine whether the complaint should be subject to further investigation, seeking advice from members of staff as appropriate.

A brief report will follow based on the evidence obtained including conclusions and, if appropriate, a suggested remedy.

This reply will be conveyed to the complainant via Principalship, outlining any further action to be implemented.

In the reply, the Principal will inform the complainant that this is the last stage of the internal complaints procedure and remind them of their right to raise the matter with an appropriate external organisation.

The target time for carrying out an appeal investigation should be within 10 working days of receipt of the request for an appeal.

If the formal complaint concerns a member of the Senior Management Team the investigation will be conducted by an appropriate Senior Manager and any appeal heard by the Principal or Deputy Principal.

4. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

On receiving an anonymous complaint Principalship will forward it to the Assistant Principal who will determine whether or not any action needs to be taken. Clearly an acknowledgement cannot be sent but there may be a need to carry out an investigation or a need just to log the complaint. Staff should be sensitive to the possible reasons why a complainant has chosen to remain anonymous.

Student complainants may also go to Personal Tutors/Senior Tutors who will act as an advocate if requested, and help to bring the complaint to Principalship for action.

5. COMPLAINTS UPHELD

When a complaint has been upheld, the response must be in writing and must contain the following standard information:

- A brief explanation of why the situation arose
- A full apology
- Brief details of the corrective action to be taken, and the time limits within which it will be completed.
- Details of who to contact if the complainant is dissatisfied with the response and wish to appeal against it (if appropriate)
- Where a complaint has revealed a fault in the internal systems/procedures of the College, then these will be examined to help ensure that similar complaints do not recur. Where appropriate the complainant will be informed of any changes made as a result of their complaint.

6. MONITORING, REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF COMPLAINTS

To provide real benefits from the complaints procedure, it is essential that all complaints received are monitored, reviewed and analysed. This will help to ensure that:

- Action can be taken to prevent the recurrence of the problem, through changes to policies, procedures and practices
- Information can be fed into the planning process and will influence future resource allocation and service provision
- Performance can be reviewed by college management, and by the Governors'
- Provide a better service for students/customers

7. GOVERNORS' BOARD INVOLVEMENT

Reports will be produced by Principalship and will be given to SMT termly for discussion and review. The Assistant Principal will monitor trends and identify areas of concern. Reports will be given to Governors on an annual basis.

College is committed to equality in accordance with current legislation.

If you have any queries or need further information or guidance on how to deal with complaints, please contact Principalship.

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years.