

# **SACRED HEART GRAMMAR SCHOOL**



## **SCHOOL RULES & INFORMATION BOOKLET**

**2019-2020**

## **CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL**

Sacred Heart Grammar School is a Catholic Voluntary Grammar School for girls aged 11-18 years. It was established in August 1930 by the Sisters of St. Clare, an order of religious women who had lived and served within Newry since 1830.

The warm, friendly and caring atmosphere of Sacred Heart Grammar School arises from the high value placed on relationships between students, staff and parents. The school environment, characterised by care and concern for others that is rooted in Catholic social teaching, is a safe and happy learning environment where every student is encouraged and enabled to develop to her full and unique potential as a human being, made in the image and likeness of God.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

To promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual, mental and physical development of the students and to prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

## **AIMS**

Our Aims are:

- to provide a Christian environment where students can grow in an appreciation of their Catholic faith and in the knowledge and love of God
- to maximise the academic and creative potential of the students through the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum
- to provide students with the necessary skills and advice relevant to their life style and future career
- to encourage students to appreciate and respect their natural environment

## **OBJECTIVES**

Our objectives are to transmit the spirit of St Francis and St Clare by:

- fostering a friendly and caring atmosphere in the school
- encouraging students:
  - to respect the dignity of the human person
  - to care for and protect their environment
  - to work for peace in their own country and throughout the world
- providing opportunities for growth in personal relationships with Christ and through provision of Retreats, participation in the receipt of the Sacraments and personal prayer

- assisting students in making informed decisions on relevant moral issues
- encouraging and assisting students to achieve high academic standards
- promoting home/school links and encouraging parents to take an active role in the education of their children
- giving students experience and appreciation of the aesthetic arts
- helping students to make appropriate life choices and encouraging them to achieve what is necessary to attain their goal
- encouraging students to participate in activities which will develop an awareness of their own cultural heritage and help them to seek to understand the traditions of other cultures
- encouraging students to participate in extra-curricular activities and to learn how to use and enjoy their leisure time.

Sacred Heart Grammar School aims to transmit to students the spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare by fostering a friendly and caring atmosphere in the school. Good discipline practices help to develop in students caring and responsible attitudes and values for life.

The school rules reflect our genuine and deep concern to encourage students to respect the dignity of the human person, to protect the safety of one another and to care for their school environment. A strong teacher- student relationship based on mutual respect and concern for each other is central to the establishment of good discipline.

Since every student has a duty to contribute to the well-being of the school, teachers consistently encourage high standards of behaviour within the school and beyond in the interests both of the student and society. The school appreciates the support received from parents in maintaining these high standards.

Since this is a Catholic School, great emphasis is put on prayer, especially at Assembly. Students are therefore expected to be punctual for each Assembly.

Students are encouraged to visit the Oratory when possible and to realize that at each moment of the day they are living out their “Morning Offering”.

Their conduct should be at all times worthy of a Christian.

## SCHOOL RULES

**Students are advised that any inappropriate or offensive behaviour may have legal implications beyond the school's control. Serious breach of rules may therefore require the intervention of outside agencies.**

## SCHOOL UNIFORM

Checklist:

- Green Blazer
- Regulation, knee length, green skirt with two pleats and no slits
- Light green shirt and clip-on school tie
- Bottle green school jumper (optional)
- Approved plain, black leather, flat-heeled shoes. Heels may not be more than 4 cm high. All types of platform shoes are unacceptable. Very light pumps are inappropriate
- Dark green tights or knee socks
- School waterproof jacket (optional) is available for purchase from *O'Neill's, The Quays, Newry*. No other coat or jacket should be worn with the uniform at any time
- School scarf (optional). No other scarf should be worn with the uniform at any time.

**For P.E.** School jersey, school shorts (compulsory in Years 8 -12), school half-zip (optional)(*available from O'Neill's, The Quays, Newry*), black school track bottoms (optional), trainers that can be securely laced.

## UNIFORM REGULATIONS

- ♣ Shirts are worn inside the skirt at all times.
- ♣ Blazers are an essential part of the uniform and should be worn at all times outside the classroom environment.
- ♣ Students may wear a wristwatch and one pair of small stud earrings only. No other jewellery may be worn. This includes rings, bracelets, nose, eyebrow, mouth and other body piercing.
- ♣ The only badges to be worn on the school uniform are official school badges.
- ♣ Full school uniform should be worn on the journey to and from school. Students are reminded that while wearing the school uniform in public they

represent the school and their conduct should at all times reflect school standards.

- ♣ Each item of uniform must be clearly marked with the student's full name. The school is not responsible for articles lost.
- ♣ Hair should be of a natural colour.
- ♣ Students are expected to take pride in their appearance and to be neat, tidy and appropriately presented at all times.

## **ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE FROM SCHOOL BY CAR**

- ♣ Students arriving by car should be dropped off in the bus park only. In the afternoon they should be collected in the car park opposite the main front door.
- ♣ Year 14 students intending to bring a car to school **must first seek the permission of the Principal by completing the appropriate form** (*available from Reception*). The form must be signed by parents/ guardians and the student will receive a *Parking Permit*. Students should park in the designated car park and *must* display their permit. Students must take extreme care when driving in the school grounds. Students are discouraged from using cars to transport other students. Cars **must** remain on the school premises between **8.50 a.m.** and **3.30 p.m.** The Staff **entrance** is reserved for staff and should only be used by students with cars **as an exit** after 3.30 p.m.

**Permission to use the school grounds for parking will be withdrawn by the Principal if students fail to comply with these rules.**

## **TRAVELLING ON SCHOOL BUSES**

- ♣ Students boarding buses, whether in school grounds or elsewhere, should do so in an orderly manner. Unruly behaviour is not acceptable. Students must follow the instructions of the bus driver and the Prefects when travelling on school buses.
- ♣ Since students are required to wear the school uniform on the journey to and from school, they should behave in an acceptable manner at all times.
- ♣ Whenever a member of staff supervises students boarding buses in the bus park students should follow instructions given by that staff member.

## THE SCHOOL DAY

A.M. Registration	9.00am	→	9.15am
Period 1	9.15am	→	9.50am
Period 2	9.50am	→	10.25am
<b>BREAK</b>	10.25am	→	10.40am
Period 3	10.40am	→	11.15am
Period 4	11.15am	→	11.50am
Period 5	11.50am	→	12.25pm
Period 6	12.25pm	→	1.00pm
Period 7	1.00pm	→	1.35pm
Period 8	1.35pm	→	2.10pm
Period 9	2.10pm	→	2.45pm
Period 10	2.45pm	→	3.20pm

### DAILY REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

- Students are expected to be in school at 8.55a.m. for Registration/ Assembly at 9.00a.m. Registers are taken between 9.00a.m. - 9.15a.m. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their daughter is punctual. Lateness is recorded on the student's attendance record.
- Students who arrive after Registration/Assembly must report to Reception immediately to sign the Late Attendance Book, recording their reason for being late. If a student has a planned late-coming, the Form Teacher/Year Head should be informed in advance and a \*Note to/from Parent/Guardian form completed.
- Morning registration closes at 10.40a.m. Arrival after 9.15a.m. but before 10.40a.m. will be denoted as Attendance Code L (late) on the register – this does not affect the student's percentage attendance for the year.
- Students who arrive after 10.40a.m. (i.e. after the close of registration) will

be officially absent for the morning session and this will be denoted with the appropriate absence code on the register - this will affect a student's percentage attendance for the year.

- Students should remain on the school premises until the end of the school day at 3.20 p.m.

*\*(The 'Note to/from Parent/Guardian' forms can be found at the back of the Student Planner).*

## **ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

- Parents/guardians are requested to inform the school of the reason for a student's absence on the **first** day of absence, indicating why the student is absent and the expected date of return.
- When the student returns to school, an **\*\*Explanations for Absence** form completed by the parent/guardian should be given to the Form Teacher explaining the absence and stating the date(s) of absence. These forms are held by school as part of the student's educational records.
- If a student's absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided by the parent/guardian to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.

*\*\*\*(The 'Explanations for Absence' forms can be found at the back of the Student Planner).*

## **APPOINTMENTS PROCEDURES**

- Students are not permitted to leave the school premises during the school day without permission.
- Requests by parents/guardians for students to leave the school premises during the school day should only be made in very exceptional circumstances. Routine medical/dental appointments should be arranged, where possible, outside school hours.
- Permission for a student to leave the school premises during the school day at the request of a parent/guardian will only be given when a completed **\*Note to/from Parent/Guardian** form is presented to, and signed by, the Form Teacher/Year Head. Parents/guardians may receive a phone call from the school to verify that the request for their daughter to leave school is genuine.
- Parents/guardians must notify the school of any planned medical/dental appointments at least one day prior to the appointment. This will ensure that the student will be marked present for the session (morning or afternoon) in

which she is attending the appointment. If the school is not informed in advance, the student will be marked absent for the appropriate session.

- ♣ Students leaving the school premises during the school day must sign out and leave the detachable part of the form\* at Reception. If they return on the same day, they must sign in again at Reception on returning to school.
- ♣ Sacred Heart Grammar School reserves the right to decline to release students before school finishes at 3.20pm.

*\* (The 'Note to/from Parent/Guardian' forms can be found at the back of the Student Planner).*

### **ILLNESS/ACCIDENT (WHILE IN SCHOOL) PROCEDURES**

- ♣ A student who is ill or has had an accident in school should report immediately to any member of the school staff or to the Medical Room.
- ♣ In the above circumstances, a student should not contact parents/guardians directly by mobile phone.
- ♣ If the nature of the illness/accident is serious or it appears that the student would be better at home, parents/guardians will be contacted and asked to collect their daughter from school.
- ♣ Parents/guardians are asked to ensure that contact details are accurate and that there is always someone who can be contacted by telephone in an emergency. The school should be informed of any change to contact details throughout the year.



## **FAMILY HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME**

- Due to the impact they have on students' learning, Sacred Heart Grammar School strongly discourages holidays during term time. Family holidays taken during term time may be categorised as an unauthorised absence.

## **DENI GUIDELINES FOR ATTENDANCE**

<b>Percentage %</b>	<b>Days of Absence (Per Year)</b>	<b>Level</b>
100	0 days missed	Excellent
95	9 days of learning missed	Satisfactory
90	19 days of learning missed	Poor
85	28 days of learning missed	Very Poor
<80	>38 days of learning missed	Unacceptable

## **PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING NON-ATTENDANCE**

- Student attendance will be recorded and monitored through SIMS Lesson Monitor.
- Student attendance will be recorded during Registration period by the Form Teacher and at the start of every period by the subject teacher.
- The 'End of Term Report' will report the student's attendance record to parents/guardians.
- If the school is concerned about an absence or pattern of absence of a student, contact will be made with home. This can take the form of a phone call or letter. Parents/guardians may be asked to make an appointment to speak to the Form Teacher, Year Head or Vice Principal.
- At the end of each term letters may be sent by the School Attendance Officer to the parents/guardians of students whose attendance falls below 90% or is causing concern.

## **SCHOOL TRIPS**

Participation in school trips is a privilege, not a right. If necessary, the school may refuse a student permission to participate if, in the view of the school, the student's conduct, academic or disciplinary record indicates that the privilege should not be extended.

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SCHOOL TRIPS

School trips play an important part in the life of Sacred Heart Grammar School. Such trips give students the opportunity to engage in experiences not available in the classroom, help develop a student's imaginative skills, encourage greater independence and enhance the student's social and cultural development. In addition, school trips assist in bonding between students, as well as providing teachers with an opportunity to get to know students in a non-classroom environment. In order to be successful and enjoyable, they also require students to understand and abide by the code of conduct outlined below.

1. Students on school trips are representing the school, and are expected to be good ambassadors for the school at all times. The highest standards of courtesy, good behaviour and consideration for others will be expected at all times.
2. Students are permitted to bring digital entertainment items including a camera phone on school trips. The taking or sharing of images considered inappropriate is not permitted. Unauthorised recording of staff or students, transfer of images of staff or students, or using digital technologies to harass or distress others will be considered a serious breach of discipline. Students are prohibited from posting images of staff or students on social networking sites during or after returning from school trips.
3. Students must be considerate of members of the public with whom they are sharing facilities, especially whilst in **accommodation allocated on residential trips**. Rooms should be kept tidy and noise should be kept to a minimum. Students should observe rules given by their hosts and adhere to any instructions given by the Group Leader.
4. Students must remain in their allocated groups, remain at least in groups of three during free time, and not go off alone or do anything that may endanger them or someone else. They must observe the instructions and reporting times laid down by the Group Leader.
5. Standards of dress and personal appearance must be appropriate to the activity and occasion. Specific guidelines will be issued by the Group Leader where considered necessary.
6. Students must tidy up after themselves, especially when travelling and whilst in **accommodation allocated on residential trips**. Damage to property must be reported immediately, and may be charged accordingly.
7. Students are advised not to bring valuable personal property e.g. jewellery etc. on trips where the loss of same is likely to cause upset. Insurance cover for such items, where such exists, may be limited.

8. All school rules with regard to alcohol, smoking, solvents or any illegal substances apply fully. Normal school sanctions will be applied, up to and including suspension and expulsion in serious cases.

The above rules apply for the duration of the trip. Minor discipline issues will be dealt with by the Group Leader at the time of the trip, but irrespective of this, all offences will be reported back to the school which may result in further disciplinary action. A serious breach of the code of conduct may result in the student involved being returned home early at the expense of her parents/guardians.

Students and their parent/guardian will be expected to read and sign the code of conduct as a condition of the student's participation in planned school trips and activities.

## **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY BLOCK**

Students should go to the Science and Technology block only when timetabled for class in these rooms. They may not remain there during break or lunch time, or after school, unless they have been given specific permission by a teacher.

## **OTHER SPECIALIST ROOMS**

Students must observe the regulations laid down by the teacher in charge in specialist rooms.

Specialist Rooms are classrooms such as the Science Laboratories, Library, Art Rooms, Study Hall etc., and are indicated by a notice on the classroom door. Class teachers will provide students with a set of instructions, which must be observed in these rooms.

## **SCHOOL LIBRARY**

When using the school library students will be expected to obey the Library regulations and co-operate with checks made by the librarian or teacher in charge.

- Any books/audio-visual material damaged or lost while in the possession of a student must be replaced or paid for by the student.
- All fiction/nonfiction books may be borrowed for a period of twelve days. Consultation books may only be borrowed overnight. Reference books may

not be borrowed from the Library.

- ♣ Failure to return borrowed items to the Library on time may result in students being suspended from using the Library resources.
- ♣ Anyone found in breach of the Library security system will be reported to the Principal.

♣

## **YEAR 13 AND YEAR 14 STUDY**

In order to create and maintain an atmosphere conducive to effective study, students are asked to study in silence and to obey the instructions of the study supervisor or teacher in charge. Year 13 students go to St Francis' Hall and Year 14 students go to the Library during their timetabled study periods. When a subject teacher is absent, Year 13 and 14 students will be instructed to go to these study areas.

## **SCHOOL MEALS**

- ♣ Food and drinks, including those purchased in the Dining Hall, should only be consumed in designated areas.
- ♣ Students may not eat or drink in classrooms, or on the corridors en route to class.
- ♣ Students should obey the lunchtime supervisors who are on duty in the school buildings and in the Dining Hall.
- ♣ Year 14 students may use the Year 14 Centre during lunch time but are asked to ensure that this room is left clean and tidy.
- ♣ Students who wish to go home for lunch on a regular basis must bring a letter from their parents/guardians when registering in August. This letter will be retained in the school office. The Form Teacher must be informed, in writing, about any changes that may arise in this arrangement.
- ♣ Students are encouraged to make use of litter bins and recycling facilities at break and lunch times.

## **SCHOOL PROPERTY**

- ♣ Students should take pride in their school and its surroundings.
- ♣ Students must exercise due care and concern at all times to ensure that school property is not abused or damaged. Such concern requires students to dispose of all litter properly.
- ♣ Any damage to school property should be reported immediately. Students will be expected to pay the cost of the repairs.
- ♣ Students are not permitted to use the school grounds out of school hours or during holidays.
- ♣ All textbooks, library books and multimedia resources belong to the school. If a student loses a textbook or resource she may be asked to pay for it or replace it.
- ♣ Students may also be required to pay reasonable costs for books/resources, which have been damaged. At the end of the year these textbooks/resources must be returned to the school in accordance with the instructions given by the class teacher/librarian.

## **USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

The use of electronic devices falls under the school's rules which all students must agree to and comply with. Access to all electronic devices should be through students' own unique C2k username and password-this should not be shared with any other users.

1. Electronic devices in this instance refer to school provided or personal machines, web- enabled smartphones, tablets, laptops, cameras or Internet enabled devices.
2. The primary purpose of the use of electronic devices in school is educational. Using the device for non-educational purposes is not permitted.
3. Students are permitted to connect to C2K wireless networking services only while using an electronic device in school. No other wireless, wired or internet service is permitted.
4. All students should be aware that their use of the internet and email is monitored by C2k and that any use deemed to be inappropriate will be reported to the appropriate authorities.
5. There are no secure facilities provided at school to store personal electronic devices. Students should therefore keep their personal electronic device with them at all times.
6. Electronic devices should be easily identified as to ownership. The school will not take responsibility for electronic devices which are lost, mislaid or stolen.
7. Use of electronic devices during the school day is at the discretion of teachers and staff. Students must use devices as directed by their teacher or study supervisor.

8. The use of any electronic device is not to be a distraction in any way to teachers or students. Electronic devices must not disrupt class or private study areas in any way. Playing games, accessing social networks or other non-school academic related activities are not permitted. This will result in the student losing the privilege of using the electronic devices on school premises.
9. Students shall not take/distribute pictures or video any other material relating to any individual without the permission of that individual (distribution can be as small as emailing/texting to another person or as large as posting an image or video online).
10. Students should be aware of “stranger danger” when communicating on-line and immediately report any unpleasant or inappropriate material that makes them feel uncomfortable when on-line.
11. Users should be aware that they are likely to be held accountable for any inappropriate use of the internet or the email provision made through their usernames and passwords.
12. Students should immediately report any device or fault involving school equipment or software to the school Net-Work Manager.

### **STUDENTS’ PERSONAL DEVICE RESPONSIBILITY**

It is the students’ responsibility to check their personal electronic device daily to ensure the device is free from unsuitable material and free from viruses etc. before bringing the device into school.

Students must check their personal electronic device daily for basic Health and Safety compliance to ensure it is free from defects. Any personal electronic device that has obvious Health and Safety defects should not be brought into school.

## **SCHOOL LIABILITY STATEMENT**

Students bring their personal electronic devices to use at Sacred Heart Grammar School at their own risk. Students are expected to act responsibly with regard to their own device, keeping it up-to-date via regular anti-virus and operating system updates. It is their duty to be responsible for the upkeep and protection of their devices.

## **DISCLAIMER**

Sacred Heart Grammar School accepts no liability in respect of any loss/damage to personal electronic devices while at school or during school-sponsored activities. The decision to bring a personal electronic device into school rests with the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s), as does the liability for any loss/damage that may result from the use of a personal electronic device in school. It is a condition of agreeing to allow students to bring personal electronic devices into school, that the parent/guardian countersigning the School Planner accepts this disclaimer.

## **USE OF MOBILE PHONES**

1. Mobile phones **must not be used to send/receive text messages/images or make/receive calls** during the school day.
2. Students are forbidden to use mobile phones to record or to produce still or moving digital images during a school activity without permission.
3. Inappropriate use of mobile phones will lead to the phone being confiscated for the remainder of the school day.
4. If a mobile phone has been confiscated 3 times parents will be required to collect it from the school at their earliest convenience.
5. Students who fail to follow the guidelines on the use of mobile phones may be asked to leave their phone at Reception during the school day.
- 6.

**Parents/Guardians should not contact students by mobile phone during the school day.** Receiving texts during lessons leads to a break in concentration and focus and should be avoided. Parents/Guardians may contact Reception to leave a message for their daughter if necessary



## **ADDITIONAL RULES**

1. Students are advised not to bring valuable articles to school.
2. Students must not remove equipment from classrooms without the permission of the class teacher.
3. Money may be left at Reception for a short period but should never be left in schoolbags, storage units or changing rooms.
4. Students are reminded that they are responsible for the care of their own personal property.
5. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen property. The storage units will be cleared on the last Friday of each month.
6. Students may not chew gum at any time during the school day.
7. The use of correcting fluids is forbidden in school.
8. School bags should not be brought into the Dining Hall. They should be left in designated areas.
9. Students should not use the corridor leading to the Staff Room as a means of access to classrooms.
10. Form Teachers check Student Planners regularly and may use the Planner as a means of communication with parents/guardians.
11. Student Planners must be in the possession of students at all times. Lost planners must be replaced immediately at a cost of £7.
12. Students must comply with examination regulations (both internal and external exams), as a breach of regulations may result in cancellation of the student's exam paper.
13. Students must comply with the dates set by subject teachers for the submission of coursework/controlled assessments.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

All students have a responsibility to ensure that high levels of safety are maintained in the school.

They should:

1. Use the footpaths provided and be careful when walking to and from the bus area and when getting on and off the bus.
2. Use extra care at the main gate, especially when crossing Ashgrove Avenue.
3. Walk at all times in single file on the left hand side of the stairs and corridors.

4. Always keep fire exits clear and keep all fire doors closed.
5. Keep school bags in a safe place and ensure that straps are not left hanging where they may be a danger to others. To minimise the potential risk of strain injuries, all students in the Junior school must use a school bag with two shoulder straps, which should be worn correctly on both shoulders.
6. Always obey safety regulations in specialist areas, rooms etc.
7. Conduct themselves with concern for their own safety and the safety of other students at break time and lunch time.
8. Not have in their possession any offensive weapon or potentially harmful instruments while on school premises. This rule also applies to playing fields, playgrounds or when students are taking part in any off- site activity organised by the school.
9. Not bring into school cigarettes, e-cigarettes, alcohol, solvents or any illegal substances.
10. Not smoke or become involved in any form of substance misuse in any part of the school building, school grounds, or on the journey to or from school.

## **ALARM SIGNALS**

### **THE FIRE ALARM HOOTER**

Primary Exits are indicated on the back of classroom doors. Students should familiarise themselves with these. Anyone discovering a fire should operate the nearest fire alarm point.

When the alarm sounds:

1. Assemble in an orderly manner in the classroom.
2. Walk in silence and single file to an Exit-Route away from the fire.
3. From the Exit go immediately to your class assembly point on the all-weather pitch.
4. There must be no rushing, pushing or overtaking en route to the assembly point.
5. Line up at the assembly point in Form Class and in alphabetical order. Then wait for further instructions.
6. Do not go back inside the school until you are given permission to do so.
7. Anyone not actually in class when the alarm sounds should go straight to the assembly point.

**Anyone who operates the Fire Alarm as a prank will be dealt with severely.**

### **VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL**

In the interests of student safety, visitors to the school are required to wear an Identification Badge. If a student encounters a stranger without this means of identification, she should report the matter immediately to any member of the school staff or at Reception.

## **SOCIAL EVENTS**

If students wish to organise any social event they must first obtain the permission of the Principal.

## **BREACH OF SCHOOL RULES**

Sanctions may be applied when a student is found to be in breach of school rules.

Serious or persistent misconduct will be dealt with through the school's Referral System and may lead to suspension or expulsion.

## **BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT**

Rules are important to the school and parental support is needed in the maintenance of dress standards and behaviour. When students break the school rules there is a series of sanctions which may be imposed.

When serious misconduct arises, or, for repeated misbehaviour, absenteeism, late-coming, lack of application or failure to present work, teachers may use the Referral System, which is described below.

## **REFERRAL SYSTEM**

### **STAGE 1**

The problem or incident is reported by the class teacher to the Form Teacher, who conducts an interview with the student.

### **STAGE 2**

If further incidents occur with the same student the matter is reported to the Year Head, who interviews the student and records the reported misdemeanour. Action taken to resolve the problem may be: withdrawal of privileges, other appropriate sanctions, or, to put the student on Report for a period of one week.

### **STAGE 3**

If a student is reported to the Year Head a second time this incident is recorded and the student may be put on Report for two weeks. A letter is sent to the parents/guardians inviting them to meet the Year Head and informing them that one further report to the Year Head could lead to suspension.

### **STAGE 4**

A third report to the Year Head is referred to the Vice Principal or Principal. Parents/Guardians are interviewed regarding the student's behaviour/ progress, and a period of suspension may be imposed (not exceeding 5 days).

### **STAGE 5**

Only the Board of Governors can expel a student from school and no student shall be expelled unless she has first served two periods of suspension.

**In the event of a serious breach of discipline the referral procedures will not operate but the matter will be dealt with directly by the Principal and the Board of Governors.**

*It may be necessary to make changes to some rules during the course of the school year. Students will be notified of these changes accordingly.*

# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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### **1. Foreword**

At Sacred Heart Grammar School we aim to work closely with parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of the child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent/guardian may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. We have the best interests of all our students 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 concerns 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 staff and the wide range of users is vital to the effective management of the school.

If a parent/guardian has any issues, then they should talk to the Form Teacher / Year Head as soon as possible. Concerns about matters other than in the classroom should be raised with the Principal. We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

### **2. Aims of Complaints Procedure**

Our school ethos promotes open communication with parents/guardians and encourages a continuing dialogue between home and school throughout a student's education. The aim of this policy is to ensure that a complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. We will try to resolve every complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances.

When dealing with complaints the school will:

- encourage resolution of all concerns and complaints as quickly as possible

- provide timely responses to concerns and complaints
- keep parents/guardians informed of progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation of a complaint where appropriate
- have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved
- respect confidentiality
- fully address concerns and complaints and provide an effective response
- take appropriate action to rectify the issue and prevent it happening again where appropriate
- be responsive to learning from outcomes which will inform and improve practice within the school.

### **Policy Statement**

Any issues which arise are normally dealt with informally through discussion and parents /guardians are fully involved in key decisions which affect their daughter's career. We publish contact details for pastoral and academic staff on our school website and school app and further details are available from the school office. We encourage parents/guardians to use these channels should an issue arise as we need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction or concern. Parents/guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where there is a legal requirement to share this information.

Complaints will always be dealt with in accordance with this policy. Parents/guardians and students should never feel (or be made to feel) that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a student or her opportunities at this school.

### **3. The Complaints Procedure – At a Glance - Timescales**

Please contact the school as soon as possible, unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered within 6 months of origin of the complaint to the school.

We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to working days, we mean Monday to Friday, when the School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website.

## **Acknowledgement**

We will acknowledge a written notification by telephone, e-mail or letter within five working days of receipt during term time. In the holidays the acknowledgement will be made as soon as is practicable and not later than five working days beyond the start of the next term or half term. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the appropriate member of staff will arrange to either speak with the parent/guardian over the phone or invite them to a meeting, within ten working days.

## **The Three Stages of the Complaints Procedure:**

This policy describes a three stage procedure:

Stage 1: Informal raising of a concern/complaint notified orally or in writing to a member of staff

Stage 2: A formal complaint in writing to the Principal

Stage 3: A formal complaint in writing to a Chairperson of Board of Governors

## **Stage 1: Informal Resolution**

It is hoped that all complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents /guardians have a concern or a complaint they should normally first contact their daughter's Form Teacher. It is anticipated that Form Teachers themselves will be able to resolve the majority of concerns to the parents'/guardians' satisfaction, although it might be necessary to consult the subject teacher if the concern is of an academic nature or with the Year Head if the concern is of a pastoral nature. Similarly, Form Teachers might need to refer to the Vice Principal or Principal if the concern is about a disciplinary matter. In some instances, it might be appropriate for parents/guardians to raise their concern directly with the Principal.

The Form Teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within a reasonable period of time (normally 14 days), or in the event that the Form Teacher and the parents/guardians fail to reach a satisfactory solution, then parents/guardians will be advised to proceed to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure.

## **Stage 2: A formal complaint in writing to the Principal**

If the concern or complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then parents/guardians should put their concern in writing to the Principal.



Please provide as much information as possible including;

- name and contact details
- what the complaint is about
- what has already been done to try to resolve it and
- what you would like the school to do to resolve the complaint.

Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged, and the Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases, the Principal will meet with the parents/guardians, normally within 14 working days of receiving the complaint if it is in term time, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

The School aims to resolve all complaints within 21 working days of receiving the complaint. It might be necessary to carry out further investigation, for example where there are other parties involved. Once the Principal is satisfied that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents/guardians will be informed of this decision during a pre-arranged meeting or directly in writing. The Principal will also give reasons for his/her decision. If parents/guardians are still not satisfied, they should proceed to Stage 3 with their complaint.

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

### **Stage 3: A formal complaint in writing to a Chairperson of Board of Governors**

This stage of the Complaints Procedure will only be necessary should the matter not be resolved at the former two stages.

If this stage has been reached, parents/guardians should write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors (care of the school 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 complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 school working days. The Chairperson will convene a committee as soon as practicable and normally within 21 days to review the complaint.

If possible, the committee will resolve the parents’/guardians’ concern immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the committee will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all the relevant facts, the committee will, within

7 days of the ending of the hearing, consider whether to uphold the complaint, in whole or in part, or dismiss the complaint. The Chairperson of the committee will write to the parents /guardians informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within 28 school working days from the date of receipt of the complaint.

If following Stage 3 of the complaints procedure parents/guardians should remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, they 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. Parents/guardians have the right to complain to the Ombudsman if they feel that they have been treated unfairly or have received a poor service from the school and their complaint has not been resolved to their satisfaction. A complaint should normally be referred to NIPSO within six months of the final response from the School.

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)

### **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 having been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If they try to re-open the same issue, the Chair of Governors will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant repeatedly continues to contact the school with the same issue it may choose not to respond.

A copy of this Complaints Procedure is available on the school website/school app or is available from the Main Office on request.