

ST. ANDREW'S C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

Complaints Policy



Purpose of the Complaints Procedure

This procedure aims to reassure parents and others with an interest in the school that:

- Any complaint against the school will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution; and
- The school recognises that a willingness to listen to questions and criticism and to respond positively, can lead to improvements in school practices and provision for pupils.

Scope of the Procedure

- A complaint is defined as a clear statement of dissatisfaction about any specified aspect of the school's work.
- A procedure deals with specified day-to-day complaints against the management and/or operation of the school which fall outside the scope of the following procedures:

Complaints which have an alternative statutory avenue of appeal or complaint, i.e. admissions, exclusions, SEN assessments, and those covered by the Education (School Records) Regulations 1989 such as Disability Discrimination claims.

Serious complaints that must be dealt with by specific employment procedures e.g. allegations of professional misconduct, criminal offences or those that are potentially staff disciplinary issues. Such complaints will be dealt with under internal school procedures and the outcome will be confidential to the employee and employer

Allegations relating to abuse of children or vulnerable adults.

- Complainants may be anyone e.g. parents, guardians, grandparents, neighbours of the school or anyone with an interest in the work of the school. However, it is expected that it will be mainly parents or guardians who will make use of this procedure. The term 'parent' is therefore used throughout the procedure as a generic term but the procedure also applies in relation to any other type of complainant.
- Complaints may be made by telephone, e-mail, in person or be written.

General

- Records of all conversations and meetings with parents to resolve complaints will be kept. To help prevent recurring complaints, copies of correspondence and notes will be kept on file in the school's records, separately from individual pupil records.
- If at any stage in the procedure it becomes apparent that for any reason the complaint falls outside of this general complaints procedure, parents will be informed.

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- There may be rare occasions when, despite all the stages of the procedure having been followed, a parent remains dissatisfied. If the parent seeks to re-open the same issue, the school reserves the right to inform him/her in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed.
- Complaints need to be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. The time limits set within this procedure will be adhered to wherever possible, however where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the extended deadline, with an explanation of the reasons for extending.
- Where complaints are made about events that took place more than 6 months earlier, or where a pupil concerned has left the school, the school reserves the right to not consider those complaints through this procedure. For example, where proper investigation would not be possible given the passage of time or where it is clearly impossible for the Governing Body to put things right for that pupil. However, the Governing Body has a duty of care to the pupils who remain on roll and where appropriate such complaints may be considered by means of a management review. In these circumstances the parent will be informed of any changes to practice and procedures, which have been agreed by the Governing Body as a result of the issues raised but there is no right of escalation through this procedure.
- We understand that people may become angry, when they feel matters are not being dealt with as they wish. If that anger escalates into verbal or physical aggression towards our staff, we consider that to be unacceptable. Any aggression or abuse directed towards our staff will not be tolerated.

Concerns will be dealt with in this order:

1. Classteacher
2. Phase Leader & Classteacher
3. Assistant Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher
4. Headteacher



Stage 1 : Raising a Concern

Informal Stage – class teacher and/or Phase Leader

On occasion, a parent may raise a concern directly with school staff informally. At this stage, it may be unclear whether the parent is making a complaint or seeking information or clarification. In any event, the school aims to resolve the concern at this point in a speedy and effective way.

- If you have any concerns relating to your child at school, you should initially discuss your concerns with the class teacher.
- The vast majority of concerns can be dealt with by either chatting with the class teacher after school or during a short meeting. This can be arranged for the beginning or end of the school day, via the office.
- Most concerns can be dealt with at this level. However, if you are not satisfied with the outcome of your discussion, then a further appointment may be arranged with both the class teacher and the appropriate Phase Leader (EYFS, KS1, lower KS2 or upper KS2)

Exceptions:

Should the complaint be about any member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) then the complaint should go directly to the Headteacher.

Should the complaint be about the Headteacher, then the complaint should go directly to the Chair of Governors.

Should the complaint be about the Chair of Governors, then the complaint should go directly to the Governor Complaints Panel (GCP)

Stage 2: Escalating a Concern

Involvement with the Assistant Head and/or Deputy Head

If after meeting with the teacher and/or Phase Leader, you are still not satisfied with the outcome then an appointment may be made to bring the issue to either the Assistant Headteacher or the Deputy Headteacher. An appointment can be made through the office to meet with either of the Assistant Heads or Deputy Head.



Stage 3: A meeting with the Headteacher

If the concern cannot be resolved and the parent wishes to continue with a complaint, the opportunity to discuss the matter with the Headteacher will be given.

The Headteacher will discuss the issue with the parent and those involved in school, with the aim of resolving the complaint as soon as possible. The parent will be informed, within 5 school days of the discussion, of the outcome of the investigation and what action, if any, the school proposes to take.

The parent will be advised of their right to request that the complaint is considered formally at Stage 4, with the Chair of Governors, if they are dissatisfied with the response and resolution offered at Stages 2 or 3.

Stage 4 : Formalising a Complaint **Referral to the Chair of Governors for further investigation**

- Complaints only rarely reach this level. However, where the complaint has escalated from Stage 3, the Chair of Governors will hear it. The complaint must be in writing and addressed to the Chair of Governors.
- The Chair of Governors will acknowledge the written complaint within five school days of receipt and provide an opportunity for the parent to meet with them to discuss the complaint.
- The Chair of Governors will investigate the complaint and a written response will normally be made within ten school days of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date.
- The written response will include full reasons for the conclusions reached by the Chair of Governors and what action, if any, the school proposes to take to resolve the matter.
- If the parent still remains dissatisfied, he/she will be advised that, in order to progress the complaint further, he or she must notify the Chair of Governors in writing within ten school days of receipt of the Stage 4 response.
- The Chair of Governors will then ensure that the parent is offered the opportunity of taking the complaint to the Governors' Complaints Panel at Stage 5 of this Procedure.



Stage 5: Review by the Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP)

- Complaints rarely reach this level. However, when the need arises, the Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP), established according to the suggested composition detailed in **Appendix 1** attached, will consider complaints at this stage.
- A written acknowledgement of the complaint and the request for it to be heard at Stage 5 of the Procedure will be sent to the parent by the GCP within five school days of receipt.

The letter will inform the parent that the complaint will be heard by the GCP within twenty school days of receiving the complaint. It will also inform the parent of the right to submit any further documents other than the complaint form and that these must be made available to the GCP within five school days of receipt of the acknowledgement letter. The right to call witnesses to the meeting, subject to the approval of the GCP, and the right of the parent to be accompanied by a companion of her/his choice, will also be explained in the letter.

- The GCP will send a copy of the letter of acknowledgement of the complaint to the Chair of Governors and/or Headteacher and request a written report in response to the complaint to the GCP within five school days of receipt of the letter. The right to call witnesses, subject to the approval of the GCP, will also be explained.
- The GCP will then convene a meeting, having consulted with all parties on convenient times. The date, time and venue for the meeting will then be confirmed at least five school days in advance of the meeting.
- The names of all parties and witnesses (if any) to attend the meeting and all relevant documents to be referred to at the meeting will also be provided by the GCP to:

The parent;
The Chair of Governors and/or Head Teacher;
Each panel member.

This will be provided as soon as possible and, in any event, at least five school days prior to the meeting.

- The meeting will be held following the procedures for hearing a complaint detailed in **Appendix 2**.
- A written decision will be sent to both the parent and the Chair of Governors and/or Headteacher by the GCP within ten school days of the hearing.

The letter will explain that the decision of the GCP represents the end of the school's complaint procedure and what options remain open to the parent if they still remain dissatisfied.

Note: Complaints will be dismissed if, once the complaints procedure has started, the complainant opts to publish details on social media.



Appendix 1

Composition of the Governors' Complaints Panel

- The Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP) should consist of three members of the Governing Body.
- A Chair of the GCP should also be appointed.

No member of the GCP should have had prior involvement with the complaint. As the Chair of the Governing Body is involved at an earlier stage in the procedure (particularly where the complaint is about the Headteacher) he will not be included as a member of the GCP to avoid any possible reference to the Chair being "tainted".

It is not considered appropriate for the Headteacher to be a member of the GCP. The role of the Headteacher would be to attend the panel hearing to give evidence and s/he may choose to invite staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant (subject to the approval of the Chair of the GCP).



Appendix 2

Governors' Complaints Panel Procedures for Hearing the Complaint

Introduction

The aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve a reconciliation between the school and the parent. The Chair of the Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP) will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.

Although the meeting will follow the structured order below, given potential sensitivities and anxieties, the Chair will endeavour to ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible and that all parties are put at their ease.

The introduction of new information or witnesses, previously not notified to all parties, would be reason to adjourn the meeting so that everyone has time to consider and respond to the new information.

Order of the meeting

1. The Chair welcomes the parent and his/her companion and the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors (where the complaint has been addressed by the Chair of Governors at stage 2) and introduces the GCP.
2. The Chair explains the purpose of the meeting, the procedure, and that all written evidence has been made available to all parties.
3. The parent/companion explains the complaint, calling in witnesses if appropriate.
4. The GCP may question the parent/companion and witnesses.
5. The Headteacher/Chair of Governors present a response to the complaint, including action taken to address the complaint at stage 1 and 2 of the procedure and calling witnesses, if appropriate.
6. The GCP may question the Headteacher/Chair of Governors.
7. The Headteacher, together with the Chair of Governors, where applicable, is invited make a final statement.
8. The parent/companion is invited make a final statement.
9. The parent/companion, Headteacher and Chair of Governors retire.

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10. The GCP considers the complaint and reaches a unanimous or majority decision. The GCP also decides what action (if any) to take to resolve the complaint and, if appropriate, recommends changes to ensure similar complaints are not made in future.

11. The outcomes are confirmed in writing to both parties

Reviewed: Spring 2020

Approved by: Resources Committee

Next Review Due: Spring 2022

Monitored by: Headteacher