

St. John's C of E (VA) Primary School Complaints Policy and Procedure



Date: May 2020
Frequency of review: Bi-annual
Reviewed by: P&F

As a Church of England School, Christian values are at the heart of all we do. We value our relationship with parents and all members of the school and local community. If you have a concern, we want to know about it so that it can be dealt with immediately. Most concerns can be dealt with easily and quickly but to ensure all concerns are handled effectively, the Governing Body has adopted a complaints policy and procedure. This policy has been developed from Southwark Diocesan Board of Education's 'Complaints policy and procedure guidelines for Governors' issued in March 2020.

As a school we actively welcome the views and opinions of all members of our school community. The school will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly. As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to school improvement. The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the Governing Body can be a useful tool in evaluating a school's performance.

What is required by law?

Since 1 September 2003 governing bodies of all maintained schools and maintained nursery schools in England have been required, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, to have in place a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. The law also requires the procedure to be publicised.

School Complaints Toolkit 2014 Departmental advice for maintained schools, maintained nursery schools and local authorities August 2014

The School's Complaints Procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means;
- be simple to use and understand;
- treat complaints confidentially;
- allow problems to be handled swiftly;
- ensure consistency of action for the handling of complaints
- inform future practice so that the problem is unlikely to recur;
- reaffirm the partnership between parents, staff and governors as they work together for the good of the pupils in the school;
- ensure that a full, fair investigation takes place as appropriate
- ensure that the school's attitude to a pupil would never be affected by a parental complaint;
- discourage anonymous complaints;
- actively encourage strong home-school links;
- ensure that all staff have opportunities to discuss and understand the school's response to concerns and complaints made by parents;
- ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint;
- ensure that all parties are kept informed of the progress

- regularly review its system for monitoring concerns and complaints received from parents;

EXPRESSING A CONCERN: NOTES FOR PARENTS

If you have a concern

We would like you to tell us about it directly so that we can talk with you and see how best to resolve your concern. It is important that any concern is raised as soon as possible. The majority of concerns can be resolved informally by speaking to a member of staff. We take concerns seriously and welcome suggestions for improving our work in the school. Whatever your concern, please know that we shall treat it as strictly confidential.

Be assured that no matter what you wish to share with us, our support and respect for you and your child in the school will not be affected in any way; please do not delay telling us of your concern.

After hearing your concern, we will act as quickly as we can; we will let you know the timescale within which you may expect a response. Please allow time for any action we may take to be effective. Our procedure is in three stages outlined below:

What to do first (Stage 1 – informal)

Please contact your child's class teacher or other appropriate member of staff, and arrange a time when you can discuss your concern. It may be possible for you to see the member of staff straight away but normally it is better to make an appointment so that you can sit and talk things through. It may be possible to give a response immediately, but where any investigation or information is required, a response will be given within five school days.

If you need further action (Stage 2 – informal)

Please contact a member of the Senior Leadership Team to arrange a time when you can meet with them informally to discuss your concern. All efforts will be made to meet with you as soon as possible and within five school days. It may be necessary for the member of SLT to investigate the matter and they will get back to you as soon as they can (within five school days of your meeting).

What to do next (Stage 3- Formal)

If you are still unhappy, ask for an appointment with the Head Teacher within 10 school days of receiving a response under Stage 2. It is helpful if you can give a brief outline of your concern on the School's complaints form when you make the appointment. After your discussion with the Head Teacher you may have to wait a short time while investigations are carried out. Every effort will be made to resolve the situation as quickly as possible and the Head Teacher will send you a written response within 5 school days of your meeting. If it is not possible to respond within this timescale, the Head Teacher will tell you when you can expect a response.

If you are still having concerns (Stage 4- Formal)

The problem will normally be resolved by this stage. However, if you still have concerns and they have not been resolved you may ask for your complaint to be considered by the complaints panel of the Governing Body by writing to the Chair of Governors* c/o The School. The complaints panel will be formed of three governors who have had no prior involvement in the complaint, they will listen to you, to the Head Teacher and, if appropriate, any others involved and come to a decision. You may bring a friend to the

hearing if you wish.

Complaints from other members of the school community

Pupils too may wish to express a concern. They are encouraged to speak to an appropriate adult who will investigate the concern and seek to resolve the matter informally. Should the investigation raise serious issues these will be dealt with by following school policies and procedures such as the behavior or anti bullying policies.

Visitors to the school may also raise concerns or make a verbal or more formal complaint. These will be investigated as with parental complaints and the complainant will be responded to following the same procedure.

The handling of any anonymous complaints will be left to the Head Teacher's or chair of governor's discretion to decide whether the complaint justifies investigation.

Roles in the complaints procedure

Head Teacher

The Head Teacher is responsible for the organisation and management of the school and its staff. The Head Teacher has overall responsibility for considering complaints in the first instance or if appropriate, arranging for a designated member of staff to deal with them.

If a governor or a member of staff receives a written complaint this should be forwarded to the Head Teacher.

Where other members of staff are designated to consider complaints there will always be arrangements for the Head Teacher to be kept fully informed of the complaint and the way in which it is being addressed. In determining which course of action to take over a response to a complaint, the Head Teacher may wish to consult the Chair of the Governing Body, the Local Authority or the Diocesan Board.

The Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for the overall conduct of the school and ensures that a complaints procedure is in place.

If a governor is approached directly, the complainant will be referred to the appropriate person in accordance with the complaints procedure. Only in circumstances where the Head Teacher is the subject of the complaint would the chair of governors undertake the initial investigation. If the Chair of the Governing Body receives a formal written complaint, the Chair would normally first discuss the matter with the Head Teacher and follow the appropriate process.

After a complaint has been dealt with it may be appropriate for the Head Teacher or chair of governors to report to the governing body without mentioning named or information which would identify individuals.

The complaints panel

The Governing Body appoints a complaints panel to consider any formal written complaint. This is formed of three governors who have been nominated by the governing body for the duration of the academic year.

Requests to record meetings

The school cannot guarantee secure storage or confidentiality to others involved in the proceedings if a meeting has been recorded by a complainant. Instead notes should be taken of all meetings and copies, marked confidential should be sent to the participants as a record of what was said. Any request to record proceedings

will be refused by the Head Teacher and governors.

Child Protection

For any complaint that involves a potential child protection issue, local authority procedures will be followed and appropriate agencies will be informed.

Monitoring of complaints

All formal complaints are reported to Governors on a termly basis. They will monitor the number and nature of any complaints in order to identify any trends or recurring issues so that services can be improved.

Further rights of appeal

Parents may, if they believe the Governors' complaints panel has acted unreasonably, or that the governors have not followed their own procedures in considering the complaint, make a complaint to the Department for Education using an on-line complaints form. In academies, complaints are made to the Education Funding Agency.

Parents may also complain to OFSTED, but OFSTED will not normally investigate complaints concerning individual pupils, but if there are any child protection concerns they may pass these to social services, or the police and this may trigger an inspection.

What is not covered by this complaints procedure?

A complaints procedure covers those aspects of school life for which there is no statutory or separate procedure. It does not therefore apply to complaints or appeals about:

- Statutory assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Pupil admissions
- Pupil exclusions
- Staff discipline, grievance, capability or pay
- School re-organisation proposals
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation
- Whistleblowing allegations, eg, of financial impropriety or criminal activity
- A third party who hires or uses the school premises or facilities

These will be addressed by their own protocol/procedure



Annex A Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Head Teacher or the Chair of Governors (if making a complaint about the Head Teacher) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

I wish to meet to discuss the following matter:

Your name:	
Pupil's name:	
Your relationship to the pupil:	
Address:	Day time telephone number:
	Evening telephone number
	email address:
Postcode:	
Please give details of your complaint/concern and how it has affected you (<i>including dates, times, details of witnesses etc</i>) to allow the matter to be fully investigated :	

<p>What action have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? Who did you speak to and what was the response?</p>	
<p>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</p>	
<p>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, give details.</p>	
<p>Dates/times when it would be most convenient for a meeting</p>	
<p>Signature:</p>	<p>Date:</p>

When we receive a written complaint, we aim to acknowledge its receipt within 3 days and send a full or interim response within 10 school days.

SCHOOL USE

<p>Date received:</p>	<p>By whom:</p>
<p>Date acknowledgement sent:</p>	<p>By whom:</p>
<p>Complaint referred to:</p>	<p>By whom:</p>

Please return this form to the Head Teacher