



ST MARY'S CE (A) FIRST SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE DOCUMENT

Philosophy

We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children, and that the headteacher and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, we have procedures in place to ensure that parents can raise concerns and complaints. The policy sets out the procedure that the school follows in such cases.

If any parent is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school, we encourage that person to talk to the child's class teacher immediately. We deal with all complaints in accordance with procedures set out by Staffordshire County Council.

If the school cannot resolve any complaint itself, those concerned can ask the LEA to intervene.

The Governing Body of St Mary's school has adopted the County Complaints Procedures to deal with complaints that have not been dealt with through informal discussions.

Aims

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues.

We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

Guidelines

All members of staff should be aware of the complaints procedure and understand:

- The importance of attempting to resolve problems before they become formal complaints,
- The importance of treating complaints respectfully.

Expressing Concerns

Parents and carers who have a concern should initially speak to the class teacher at a time convenient to both parties in order to explain the issue. Time may be needed to give the teacher the opportunity to investigate the concern. If the parent or carer does not feel that the issue has been adequately resolved they can request an informal meeting with a member of the senior leadership team. At this point, notes of the meeting should be made and the Head Teacher informed.

Formal Complaints

Stage 1 - The Head Teacher

- The head teacher will be aware that a parent has raised a concern, but will need to consider whether the complainant can be satisfied without recourse to the governing body.
- The response to the parent should be as described in Appendix 1.
- Action through a complaints procedure may lead to action being initiated under other procedures. This may be disciplinary or child protection procedures and consideration will be given to this possibility at the earliest stage. In these cases, the investigations under the complaints procedure will be suspended until action under the other procedures (including appeals) has been concluded. The complainant will be advised if this is the case and also informed of the likely delay in the final resolution of their complaint.

Stage 2 - formal complaint to the Governing Body

If the complaint cannot be resolved, the complainant can refer the complaint in writing (see Appendix 2 for a pro-forma) to the Chair of the Governing Body, addressed via the school office.

- The school will record when the complaint is received.
- The complaint will be acknowledged in writing by, or on behalf of, the Chair of Governors. This should include an explanation of what will happen next, the time scale involved and the name of the person from whom they will next hear about the progress of the investigation.
- Details of the complaint will be kept confidential, except in so far as they need to be shared with people who might need to contribute to their resolution.

The Role of the Chair of Governors

The Chair of Governors will consider whether the investigation can be completed by the head teacher (who will already have been involved), the Chair him/herself, or whether to refer the complaint to a Complaints Committee of the Governing Body. If the latter course of action is followed the chair will present a full report to the Committee and, if necessary, external advice may be sought from the District Education advice may be sought from the Local Authority.

- It would be appropriate for this committee to be made up of three Governors. The membership should not include the Headteacher and, according to the matter complained about, it may not be appropriate for certain categories of Governor to be included.
- The Committee should meet at a time convenient to the members of the Committee, the Chair (who will present the report), the parent (in order that they may make representations in person) and any witnesses.
- Each individual stage of the complaints process should take no longer than 20 school days to complete, and if this will be exceeded for any reason then an explanation should be provided to the complainant.

Where a complaint is not upheld the complainant must be given a response and informed of any further action that might be appropriate in their situation (see Appendix 2)

Whether the complaint has been investigated by the head teacher, chair of governors or a complaints committee, a written response will be sent to you outlining the outcome of the investigation, detailing how the conclusion has been reached, and enclose a copy of the minutes. The letter will also tell you where to next take the complaint, if you are not satisfied with the response provided.

The Complaints Committee may reach the following conclusions:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The aim of the investigation or review will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between you and the school. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that sometimes you may not be satisfied with the outcome if matters are not found in your favour.

You may remain dissatisfied despite all the procedures having been followed and reasonable responses being provided. It may be the case that it is not possible to resolve all your concerns and meet all your wishes. Sometimes it is preferable to 'agree to disagree' and move on.

If you do continue to make representations to the school on the same issues, the Governing Body reserves the right to inform you, in writing, that the appropriate procedures have all been followed, that all reasonable actions have been taken to try to resolve the issue and that the matter is now closed. Should you then write to the School again on the same issue(s), there is no obligation on the School to respond to you in that case.

Correspondence received from any complainant subsequent to closure will be kept on file, indefinitely, as will notes of telephone calls and any further personal calls referring to the matter.

Stages 3 and 4 - The role of the LEA

Parents do not have a general right of appeal should they disagree with the Governors' decision. They may, however, raise the matter with the Local Education Authority or Secretary of State if they consider the complaint wasn't investigated properly and fairly. If the Governors have followed a proper procedure and considered the complaint reasonably, neither the Local Education Authority nor the Secretary of State can reverse their decision.

LEA contact: Corporate Director, County Education Offices, Tipping St., Stafford, ST16 2DH.

Monitoring - Senior Management & Governor Personnel Committee following a complaint, and review every two years.

Reviewed April 2022 To be reviewed April 2024

Appendix 1

Outcomes

In all cases where a complaint has been investigated the complainant will be given a written response covering:

- the complaint;
- the scope of the investigation;
- the conclusion of the investigation;
- any action which has resulted.

The Committee may wish to offer the complainant the opportunity to discuss the response.

If the investigation upholds the complaint, redress should be appropriate to the complaint and may include:

- An appropriate expression of regret.
- Providing the solution desired by the complainant.
- Changing the procedures to avoid future problems.

The school will take responsibility for:

- Deciding who can take remedial action.
- Ensuring that the remedy is carried out.
- Ensuring that any remedy is within the school's powers.
- Ensuring the approach to remedies is reasonable and consistent.

Appendix 2

Complaints and Compliments

Please complete this form and return it to the school who will then forward it to the Chair of the Governing Body. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

1 Name

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2 Address

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3 Telephone
Number

Home

Work

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4 Name of Child

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5 Details of the Complaint/Compliment (please include the date or period of time to which your complaint relates and confirm whether you have already expressed your concerns informally, and to whom and when).

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6 Do you have a suggestion for change?

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Please attach copies of any more information you have to back up your complaint such as letters or report.

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COMPLAINTS FORM

Please complete this form and return it to the school who will then forward it to the chair of the governing body. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

The procedures to be followed in dealing with the complaint are outlined on the reverse of this form.

1. **Name**

2. **Address**

3. **Telephone Number**
(Home) (Work)

4. **Name of Child**

5. **Details of the Complaint** (please include the date or period of time to which your complaint relates and confirm whether you have already expressed your concerns informally, and to whom and when)

6. **Do you have a suggestion for change?**

Please attach copies of any more information you have to back up your complaint, such as letters or reports.

Signed **Date**

Dear _____

(Name of Pupil)

Thank you for your letter of *(date)*, making a formal complaint against the school in relation to your son/daughter *(name of pupil)*. I have asked the complaints committee of the governing body to investigate your complaint and a meeting has been arranged for *(date, time and venue)*. You are invited to attend the meeting to present your case in person.

Please let me know if you do not wish to attend the meeting or if the date and time is inconvenient for you. Following the meeting a written report will be sent to you confirming the findings of the committee and, if applicable, the course of action to be taken.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of Governing Body

Dear _____

Name of Pupil

The complaints committee of the school's governing body considered your complaint at a meeting held on *(date)* and which you attended / did not attend *(delete as appropriate)*.

I can now inform you that the committee's views on the complaint are as follows:-

I trust that you feel that the meeting gave you the opportunity to express your views and that members of the committee gave full and fair consideration to your complaint.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of Governing Body