



ST. MARK'S CE SCHOOL
ONE SCHOOL - SERVING ALL - THROUGH EXCELLENCE

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Policy Statement and Guidelines

Policy Date: October 2023

Review Date: October 2024

Policy Statement

At St Mark's Church of England School we believe that:

- We work in partnership with parents/guardians or carers/other stakeholders and seek to improve our school by paying close attention to their concerns;
- All complaints should be received courteously;
- The complainant should feel that their complaint has received full attention;
- All complaints should be fully investigated;
- The complainant should receive prompt feedback;
- Urgent complaints should receive immediate attention;
- Complaints, wherever possible, should be resolved through open, informal discussion between the complainant and the staff member.

Complaints Procedure

Timescales

These guidelines have been written to ensure that all complaints will be dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible by the school. The length of the period of time to respond to and resolve complaints will vary with the gravity and complexity of the complaint and the urgency with which it needs to be settled. The intention is that all complaints should be settled within a period which is considered reasonable by all parties and where appropriate indicative timescales have been identified.

Concern or Complaint?

Any concerns expressed by parents/guardians or carers and others about the school curriculum and related matters should be addressed by informal discussion with the Teacher(s), Senior Leadership Team/Executive Headteacher in the first instance. This includes complaints about Religious Education and Collective Worship, the operation of charging policies and the provision of information.

Levels of complaint

There are 3 levels which define the procedure for making a complaint:

Level 1	Informal complaint to the Teacher, Leadership Team or Head of School
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Level 2	Formal complaint to the Head of Primary or Head of Secondary
Level 3	Formal complaint to the Executive Headteacher
Level 4	Formal complaint to Governors

Level 1

- If parents/guardians or carers have any concerns about their child’s educational progress they should first discuss their concerns with the Teacher. This usually enables the problem to be sorted out swiftly and to everyone’s satisfaction. Teachers will share concerns/complaints, as appropriate, with a member of the Senior Leadership Team and/or Executive Headteacher and record the conversation on CPOMs.
- If, following discussion with the Teacher, the parent/guardian or carer are still not satisfied; they may wish to bring their concerns to the attention of the Leadership Team or Head of School Primary and finally the Executive Headteacher. Full investigation and discussion should enable most complaints to be resolved at this stage.
- Expressions of concern or complaints at this stage may be verbal or in writing.

Level 2

- Where complaints cannot be resolved informally the matter may then be considered to be the subject of a formal complaint and the complainant may then refer it to the Head of School Primary or Head of School Secondary.
- The formal complaint should be made in writing and a suggested format for the complaint is provided in **Appendix A**.
- Acknowledgement of receipt of this complaint will be made within **5 school days**.
- The Head of school primary or Executive Headteacher will fully investigate the complaint and respond, in writing, within **10 school days**.
- Where a formal complaint concerns the Executive Headteacher then it should be referred to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to Governors.

Level 3

- Where complaints cannot be resolved informally the matter may then be considered to be the subject of a formal complaint and the complainant may then refer it to the Executive Headteacher.
- The formal complaint should be made in writing and a suggested format for the complaint is provided in **Appendix A**.
- Acknowledgement of receipt of this complaint will be made within **5 school days**.
- The Executive Headteacher will fully investigate the complaint and respond, in writing, within **10 school days**.
- Where a formal complaint concerns the Executive Headteacher then it should be referred to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to Governors.

Level 4

- Where complaints cannot be resolved by the Executive Headteacher the matter may then be considered to be the subject of a formal complaint to the Governing Body.
- If any complaint is received by individual Governors, including the Chair, before the above stages have been completed, those Governors should refer the parent to the Teacher, Senior Leadership Team or Executive Headteacher.
- A formal complaint to the governors will need to be in writing to the Clerk or Chair of the Governing Body. A suggested format for making a formal complaint is provided in **Appendix A**. Acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint will be made within **5 school days**.
- Depending on the nature of the complaint, it may be that action will need to be taken by the Chair before the panel meets. This may include the resolution of the complaint without proceeding to a governors' panel hearing.
- A panel of Governors will be established to investigate and hear the complaint. The panel will not previously have been involved in any detailed discussion of this complaint.
- Urgent cases will be considered as a priority and the time between receipt of the complaint and the panel hearing should not normally exceed **15 school days**.

Guidelines relating to the panel hearing are included in **Appendix B**.

- The complainant may wish to make an oral presentation in support of their complaint and may wish to be accompanied by a friend or representative.
- The panel will consider the complaint and the chair of the panel will notify the complainant, in writing, of the panel's decision within **5 school days**.

Nature of complaint

Complaints about the education provided for pupils are to be considered as complaints about the Governing Body's responsibilities in respect of the school curriculum, but will not cover complaints about the actions of individual Teachers or the Executive Headteacher. If, in the course of consideration of a complaint, the Executive Headteacher and/or Governing Body conclude that disciplinary or other proceedings should be initiated, they should take separate action as appropriate.

Policy Monitoring & Review

Recording complaints

- The Executive Headteacher will monitor all written complaints and keep a copy of all relevant correspondence.
- If there are a number of complaints about the same issue, or a rise in the number of complaints overall, the Executive Headteacher will ensure a full investigation is undertaken.

Governing Body review

- The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of all written complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. The process of listening to, and resolving complaints should contribute to school improvement.
- Wherever practicable, complaints information shared with the whole Governing Body will not name individuals.

Appendix A – Formal Complaint Form

If making a complaint in writing the following form identifies the key information required.

Name:	
Pupil's name:	
Relationship to the pupil:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Day time telephone:	
Evening phone:	
Please give details of your complaint	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (i.e. Who did you speak to and what was the response?)	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
Signature:	

Date:	
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Official use:

Date note of receipt sent:	
Sent by:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	

Appendix B – Complaints Panel Guidelines*

The Complaints Panel

- The Governing Body will nominate a number of members with delegated powers to hear a formal complaint.
- The panel will consist of an uneven number of governors, usually
- No Governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or the circumstances surrounding it.
- In deciding the make-up of the panel, every effort will be made to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of Governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- The complaints panel will select their own Chair.

The Remit of the Complaints Panel

- It is important that the panel hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so.
- The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it is recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- The panel can:
 - 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 mitigate against problems of a similar nature reoccurring.

The Role of the Clerk

- The complaints panel will normally be clerked by the Clerk to the Governors unless that person is either unavailable or part of the complaint. In such cases alternative clerking arrangements will be made.
- The clerk will be the contact point for the complainant and will be required to:
 - **Set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;**
 - **Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;**
 - **Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;**
 - **Record the proceedings;**
 - **Notify all parties of the panel's decision.**

** Taken from the Complaints Procedure Toolkit (Department for Education, 2011)*

The Role of the Chair of the Complaints Panel

The Chair of the panel will ensure that:

- The remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- The issues are addressed;
- Key findings of fact are made;
- The panel seeks to assist parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing to feel at ease;
- The hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- The panel is open minded and acting independently;
- No member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- Each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- Written material is seen by all parties and if any new and relevant issue arises give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it;
- Notify the complainant of the panel's decision, in writing. The letter will also explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

Checklist for a Complaints Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing should be as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Executive Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Executive Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.

- The Executive Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.

