



Complaints

Procedure

Adopted by Governors April 2011
Reviewed by Governors April 2017
To be reviewed April 2018

What is a complaint?

This procedure does not limit complainants to parents or carers of pupils registered at a school. A complainant could be a member of the wider community or representing an ex-pupil. The law also requires the procedure to be publicised.

A complaint is defined as an expression of grievance or dissatisfaction received from parents/carers or members of the community regarding;

- action taken by or on behalf of the school.
- failure by the school or its staff or contractors to respond to a reported problem.
- the standard of service(s) provided or discrimination in their delivery.
- the policies of the school.

We hope that community members feel able to approach the school about any concerns they may have. Most difficulties can be resolved providing they are identified early and in many cases misunderstandings can be prevented if parents make contact with the school.

We do not expect the staff at St Peter's CE Primary School to deal with parents/carers, or anyone who is rude or aggressive in their manner, or who shout and use inappropriate language. In such cases the person will be asked to leave until they can return acting in a more appropriate manner.

Informal discussion

Most complaints or queries can be dealt with quickly and easily if parents and carers contact the relevant class teacher at the end of the school day. It should be noted that all teaching staff are usually available from 3.15 – 3.45 p.m., (with the exception of Tuesday which is Staff Meeting night) or appointments can be made. It may be appropriate to keep a record of some informal discussions to monitor for any patterns that may develop.

If the teacher or Head Teacher cannot deal with a complaint informally, the person making the complaint may wish to enter into a Formal Complaints System. All such complaints will be recorded and monitored.

Formal Complaints

The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. An example of a complaint form can be found in appendix A. At the end of a meeting or telephone call, a member of staff will ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls can be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.

Social Media

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, St Peter's CE Primary School, requests the complainants do not discuss complaints publicly via social media such as facebook and twitter. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also.

Investigating complaints

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

- establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;

- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.

Resolving a complaint

It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Dealing with Complaints

Stage 1 (informal) – Complaint heard by staff member

Head teacher is informed of outcome

If not resolved, then escalate to **Stage 2 (formal)** – Complaint heard by Head teacher

- Head teacher acknowledges receipt of complaint, talks to complainant and investigates concerns (This is carried out as soon as is practically possible after complaint has been made)
- Head teacher feeds back and/or writes to complainant with outcome of investigation

If not resolved, then escalate to **Stage 3 (formal)** – a written complaint is sent Chair of Governors

- Chair of Governors acknowledges receipt of complaint within 5 working days
- write to complainant with outcome of investigation within 10 working days
- Head teacher is informed of outcome

If not resolved then escalate to **Stage 4 (formal)** – Governors Complaints Appeal Committee meeting arranged

(Note: Members of this panel are selected according to availability of Governors at the time of the meeting. The panel will choose their own Chair. Terms of reference available in school)

The complainant will write to the nominated Clerk to the Governing Body at St Peter's CE Primary School giving details of the complaint and asking that it is put before the appeal panel. The Chair, or if the Chair has been involved at any previous stage in the process, a nominated governor, will convene a Governing Body complaints panel.

The governors' appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process and is not convened merely to rubber-stamp previous decisions.

(Note; Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.)

If the person making the complaint remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the referral to the Governing Body they may then turn to the Secretary of State.

What to do if the complaint is about the Head teacher

Complaints about the Head teacher, that the complainant cannot or does not wish to raise directly with the Head teacher, should in the first instance be sent to the chair of governors

Notification of the panel's decision

The Chair of the Panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's response (including the reasons for the decision); this is usually within a set deadline which is publicised in the procedure. The letter needs to explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed. This may be the LA or Diocesan Board.

The final stage of appeal is to the Secretary of State for Education.

Complainants should be advised to write to

The School Complaints Unit (SCU)

Department for Education

2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate

Manchester

M1 2WD

What will the Department for Education do?

If a complaint has exhausted the local procedures, SCU will examine if the complaints policy and any other relevant policies were followed in accordance with the provisions set out. SCU also examines policies to determine if they adhere to education legislation. However, the department will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint. This remains the responsibility of schools.

If legislative or policy breaches are found, SCU will report them to the school and the complainant and, where necessary, require remedial action to be taken. Failure to carry out remedial actions could ultimately result in a formal Direction being issued by the Secretary of State.

Monitoring of Complaints

An anonymous analysis of all formal complaints will be reported to the governing body regularly through the Head teacher termly report to the Governing Body. The report will include the number of formal complaints received, how many are pending, any decisions made, or any, which are to be forwarded to the Governors. This will inform Governors any necessary changes in the school's policies, practices or procedures can be considered and implemented.

For further information please refer to ***School Complaints Toolkit 2014 - Gov.uk*** 6

Appendix A

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Head teacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint.
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (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.

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Signature:

Date:
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who
Complaint referred to:
Date: