



ST. PETER'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY EDGMOND

Complaints Policy

1 Introduction

1.1 St Peter's CE Primary School & Nursery is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly, openly and impartially and to providing a high-quality service to those who raise concerns. We recognise that raising a complaint can be challenging and we aim to respond with kindness, patience and respect, in line with our Christian ethos.

However, the school also has a duty to ensure that staff and governors are able to carry out their roles without fear of abuse, harassment or unreasonable demands and that school resources are used appropriately in the interests of all children.

We strive to provide a good education for all our children. The Headteacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or guardians. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases.

1.2 If any parents are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately.

1.3 We deal with all complaints in accordance with procedures laid down by the LA. This policy has been written having regard to the best practice advice provided in DfE School Complaints Procedure 2016, the Equality Act 2010 and our duties in relation to Section 29 of the Education Act 2002. If the school itself cannot resolve a complaint, those concerned can refer the matter to the LA.

1.4 All parents have the right to appeal to the Department of Education if they still feel that their complaint has not been properly addressed.

1.5 Certain areas fall outside the scope of the school, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures. These are detailed in Appendix 1.

2 Aims

2.1 Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all concerns and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any issue through dialogue and mutual understanding. In all cases we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed and then resolved.

3 The complaints process

3.1 If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. In our experience, most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way before it escalating into a formal complaint. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school and is making

good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress. It is the policy of the school to ensure all concerns brought to the attention of the school are addressed and resolved as quickly as possible.

3.2 Where parents feel that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they can discuss the matter with a member of the Senior Leadership Team. They will consider any concern very seriously and investigate each case thoroughly on its own merits. Most issues are normally resolved by this stage.

3.3 Where parents feel that a situation has not been resolved through contact with a member of the Senior Leadership Team, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they are at liberty to make an appointment to discuss the matter with the headteacher. The headteacher considers any such concern very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly on its own merits.

3.4 Should any parents have a complaint about the headteacher, they should first make an informal approach to the Chair of the Governing Body (COG) who is obliged to investigate it. The COG in question will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school but if parents are unhappy with the outcome they can make a formal complaint as outlined below.

3.5 Complaints against the Chair of Governors or any individual governor should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

3.6 Only if an informal complaint fails to resolve the matter should a formal complaint be made to the Governing Body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The parent should send this written complaint to the Chair of Governors.

3.7 The Governing Body must consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. It will arrange a meeting of the Governing Body Complaints Panel to discuss the complaint and will invite the person making the complaint to attend the meeting so that s/he can explain the complaint in more detail. The school gives the complainant at least three days' notice of the meeting.

3.8 After hearing all of the evidence, the Governors will consider their decision and inform the parent about it in writing. The Governors do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint.

3.9 If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they can refer the complaint to the Department for Education. (DFE).

The DFE will not re-investigate the matter of the complaint but will look to see that our complaints policy and any other relevant statutory policies that we hold were followed properly. The DFE will intervene if we have:

- Failed to act in line with our duties under education law
- Acted (or are proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising our functions.

If our complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, we will be asked to correct our procedure accordingly.

4. Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

4.1 Definition of unreasonable or vexatious complaints

A complaint may be considered unreasonable or vexatious when the behaviour of the complainant, rather than the complaint itself, hinders the school's ability to investigate or resolve the matter properly, or has a disproportionate impact on staff time and wellbeing.

This may include situations where a complainant:

- refuses to clearly explain the nature of the complaint despite reasonable requests for clarification
- refuses to cooperate with the complaints procedure while insisting that the complaint must be resolved
- repeatedly raises the same complaint or variations of the same complaint, despite it being investigated or having been fully investigated and responded to in line with this policy
- seeks to change the basis of the complaint as the investigation progresses
- insists on outcomes that are unrealistic, unreasonable or outside the school's powers
- raises large volumes of trivial, irrelevant or repetitive correspondence and demands immediate responses
- refuses to accept that certain issues fall outside the scope of the school's complaints procedure
- makes repeated or unjustified allegations about staff or governors involved in handling the complaint.

4.2 Unacceptable behaviour

A complaint may also be regarded as unreasonable if it is pursued in a manner that is:

- aggressive, intimidating or threatening
- abusive, offensive or discriminatory
- knowingly false or malicious
- accompanied by the use of falsified information
- published publicly (including on social media) in a way that is defamatory or harmful to individuals or the school community.

The school will not tolerate behaviour that causes distress, fear or harm to staff, governors, pupils or other members of the community.

4.3 Managing unreasonable behaviour

Where possible, the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors where appropriate) will seek to address concerns informally and explain expected standards of behaviour before taking any formal action.

If unreasonable behaviour continues, the school may:

- request that communication is limited to a particular format (e.g. written correspondence only)
- specify a single point of contact
- limit the frequency or length of communications
- refuse to respond to correspondence that is repetitive or does not raise new matters
- bring the complaints procedure to a close if it has been exhausted and the complaint has been fully addressed.

Any decision to apply these measures will be proportionate, reasonable and time-limited, and will normally be reviewed after six months.

4.4 Serious incidents

In cases involving serious aggression, threats or violence, the school will take immediate action to protect staff and pupils. This may include:

- involving the police
- banning an individual from the school premises
- taking legal advice where appropriate.

Such actions will be confirmed in writing.

4.5 Right to complain

Nothing in this section removes a parent's or carer's right to raise a genuine concern or complaint. This section exists solely to ensure that the complaints process is conducted in a way that is fair, respectful and sustainable for everyone involved.

5 Monitoring and review

5.1 The Governors monitor the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The headteacher logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

5.2 Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

5.3 This policy is reviewed every three years, or before if necessary.

Appendix 1

Complaints not in scope of the procedure. A complaints procedure should cover all complaints about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides with the exceptions listed below, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admissions to schools• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)• School re-organisation proposals• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Concerns should be raised direct with the local authority (LA). For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the LA). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/schooldiscipline-exclusions/exclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whistleblowing	Schools have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to: WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD. The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures	These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities.	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted direct.