



*Happy. Inspired. Ready*

**'Turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding'. Proverbs 2:2**

# COMPLAINTS POLICY

Action	Policy to be reviewed as required and at least annually		
	Owner	Date	Completed
Updated	M Schumm	January 2020	✓
Next Review	M Schumm	January 2021	
Approved	Board of Governors	January 2020	

At St Stephen's CE Primary School, we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which pupils are helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially.

We believe that we work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents and others involved with the school and that we can keep complaints to a minimum by forging strong links with everyone connected with the school and by having in place very good lines of communication.

However we are aware that under the Education Act 1996, parents have the right to complain directly to the Local Authority about any matter relating to the school's curriculum and any issue relating to the general education that we provide and therefore under Section 39 of the School Standards and Framework Act we are required to have in place clear procedures to deal with complaints made against the school or individuals connected with it.

A copy of this policy can be found on the school website. Hard copies are also available from the school office.

### **AIM**

- To deal with any complaint against the school or any individual connected with it by following the correct procedures.
- To deal with all complaints thoroughly and by being open, honest and fair when dealing with the complainant.
- To work with other schools to share good practice in order to improve this policy.

### **PROCEDURE**

#### **Informal Stage**

The majority of complaints/issues can be resolved informally by discussion with the member of staff concerned or the Headteacher. Parent/carers should make an appointment to discuss their concerns with the member of staff who knows about the issue or incident. If the complaint relates to a pupil, ideally the member of staff concerned should be directly involved with the pupil, in the first instance the class teacher or alternatively the Deputy Headteacher, or SENCO depending on the nature of the concern. The member of staff will usually write notes during the meeting. A copy of these notes can be requested by the parent/carer.

#### **Formal Stage**

There are three school-based formal stages:

##### **Stage 1**

If a parent/carer is dissatisfied after the informal stage, they, or the member of staff can refer the matter to the Headteacher. This should be made in writing, as this will often make the situation clear to all involved parties.

The Headteacher will offer a meeting with the parent/carer or other complainant at a mutually convenient time to discuss and clarify the issues involved.

If the issue is complex the Headteacher may need to speak to other staff and pupils to investigate the concerns. This should happen within 10 school days. If this timescale cannot be met, the Headteacher should inform the parent/carer that the investigation will take longer, explaining the reasons for this and giving a timescale for when it will be completed.

All parties will agree an acceptable outcome that is to the satisfaction of those involved. This should be written down and agreed by all parties so there is no misunderstanding and all parties should receive a copy.

## **Stage 2**

After meeting with the Headteacher, if the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, the complaint can be referred to the Chair of Governors. This should be made in writing to the Chair at the school address. The Headteacher can also refer any complaint to the Chair of Governors.

If the Headteacher is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight to the Chair of Governors and miss out Stage 1.

The Chair of Governors will offer to meet with the parent/carer or other complainant, at a mutually convenient time.

The Chair of Governors has 15 school days to investigate the complaint. If it cannot be resolved within this time, the Chair will inform the complainant, explaining the reasons for the delay and when it is expected that the investigation will be completed. Reasons for a delay may include the complexity of the situation requiring investigation or that someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays.

## **Stage 3**

If the complaint remains unresolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, or the Chair of Governors feels that it is necessary, s/he can set up a Complaints Committee to consider the complaint. As far as possible, it is recommended that Complaints Committees are a last resort.

The Chair of Governors will appoint a member of the Governing Body as an investigating officer to gather evidence and conduct preliminary interviews on the Chair's behalf. The investigating officer will provide a detailed report of his/her investigation of the complaint. Parents/carers will be given a copy of this report. It is important that the investigating officer is seen as impartial so s/he will not be a member of the associated Complaints Committee.

The Complaints Committee will be made up of three members of the Primary School's Governing Body. Sometimes Governors need to be brought in from other schools' governing bodies to ensure impartiality.

The Complaints Committee will meet at a time convenient to all parties. The complainant, the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors and any member of staff the complaint is about will be invited to the meeting. Any person invited can bring a friend or supporter if they wish. The Complaints Committee will consider any written material, and also give the person making the complaint and the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and staff an opportunity to state their case and to question others present. The Committee will ensure that all present are treated fairly. The meeting will be recorded by the Clerk to Governors and everyone present will be given a copy of the minutes.

The Committee will give its decision, in writing, within five school days after the meeting, along with the reasons for its decision.

If, after this school-based process, the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, they should write to the Secretary of State for Education if it is a general complaint, or to the Local Authority if the complaint is about the curriculum and is a curriculum related matter.

If a complaint is not from a parent/carer of a pupil of the school (eg a member of the public) these should be made directly to the Headteacher, preferably in writing.

All complaints will be recorded formally by the school in a central log.

It should be noted that schools do not need to consider complaints made more than one year after the incident/situation occurs. If a complaint is made about an issue that is over a year old, the school will write to the complainant explaining why this is the case.

### **Vexatious Complaints**

If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the GB is entitled to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

### **RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

#### **Role of the Governing Body**

##### **The Governing Body has:**

- a duty to have in place a complaints procedure;
- delegated powers and responsibilities to the Headteacher to ensure all school personnel and visitors to the school are aware of and comply with this policy;
- responsibility for ensuring that the school complies with all equalities legislation;
- responsibility for ensuring all policies are made available to parents;

- responsibility for the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this policy

### **Role of the Headteacher**

#### **The Headteacher will:**

- ensure all school personnel, pupils and parents are aware of and comply with this policy;
- provide leadership and vision in respect of equality;
- provide guidance, support and training to all staff;
- monitor the effectiveness of this policy;
- annually report to the Governing Body on the success and development of this policy

### **Monitoring and Review**

- The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school, records how they were resolved and reports to Governors termly.
- Governors will monitor the process of dealing with complaints.
- Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy.