



Through God We Achieve

OUR VISION AT ST. STEPHEN'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

To deliver outstanding education in a caring community, with God at its centre

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

OUR VALUES:

Joy - we provide a happy and stimulating environment, rooted in Christian values

Excellence - we are a church school committed to the highest standards in everything we do

Relationship – we work hand-in-hand with St Stephen's Church as well as our parents and carers

Respect - we enable our children to deepen or realise their own faith and respect the freedom of others in their beliefs

Nurture – our children are cared for spiritually, morally, intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Action	Policy to be reviewed as required and at least annually		
	Owner	Date	Completed
Updated/ Approved	SLT	July 2023	✓
Next Review	SLT	July 2024	
Approved	Governors	September 2023	

General Principles

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

We work hard to build positive and professional relationships with parents and others involved in the school community and focus on good lines of communication, to keep complaints to a minimum.

Since 1 September 2003 governing bodies of all maintained schools in England have been required, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, to have in place a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. Parents/carers and members of the public have the right to complain directly to the Local Authority about any matter relating to the school's policies and operation of the school including pupil progress, discipline, organisational matters and premises related issues.

There are some matters that are not within the remit of this policy, either because a more specific complaint process exists or because the matter is not within the control of the school or its Governing Body. Such matters include

- Complaints about Admissions or Exclusions for which separate appeal processes exist
- Safeguarding issues which are covered by the Child Protection Policy
- Complaints about the action of another parent or member of the public which are not within the school's control
- Complaints about the services provided by a person or organisation using St Stephen's which should be dealt with by that person or organisation under their complaints (users of our facilities are required to have their own complaints procedures as part of the initial lettings arrangements)
- Complaints regarding a failure to issue an Education Health and Care Plan or conduct an Annual Review which should be referred to the local Government Ombudsmen

Aims

- 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 in a timely fashion, by being open, honest and fair when dealing with the complainant.

PROCEDURE

Informal Stage

Discussion with the member of staff concerned or the Headteacher can resolve the majority of complaints/issues informally. 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 Assistant Headteacher, and/or SENCO depending on the nature of the concern. The member of staff will usually write notes (what, when, agreed outcomes) during the meeting. The parent/carer can request a copy of these notes.

Formal Stage

There are three school-based formal review 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. This might be;

- 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 account of the steps that have been taken to mitigate against it happening again
- an undertaking to review policies in the light of the complaint
- action to redress the event complained of

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 Committee is 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 Clerk to Governors will record the meeting, 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 via the DfE online form. The DfE will consider whether the school complaints policy and any other relevant policies were followed in accordance with the provisions set out and adhere to education legislation. The department will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint, which remains the responsibility of the school.

If a complaint is not from a parent/carer of a pupil of the school (e.g. 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 (a Complaints folder held in Headteacher office). Emails will be stored in Headteacher domain on computer.

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 and unreasonably persistent 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.

In cases of vexatious and unreasonably persistent complaints, the school may, after consultation with the Local Authority, decide to impose restrictions. These will be tailored to the individual complainant but may include:

- Informing complainant that behaviour is unreasonable or unacceptable and request a changed approach
- Ensure all meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present and notes to be taken
- Informing the complainant, except in emergencies, the school will only respond to written communications and that these may be channelled through the Local Authority
- Banning or restricting the complainant from being on the school premises.

In the case of abuse or harassment, the school may call the police and take appropriate legal action.

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 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 and record how many complaints in HT Report to Governors.

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.

Please note attached Complaints form for record keeping purposes