

Complaints Policy

'St. Michael's CE (Cont) Infant School aims to provide a caring Christian Community where everyone is valued and nurtured within a safe environment. All our policies take account of and reflect the distinctive nature of our Church of England School.'

Rationale

This policy is intended to set out how the school will deal with general complaints. Parents should feel able to express their views knowing that they will be dealt with fairly.

This policy does not cover those aspects of school life where the law sets specific complaints procedures i.e. admissions, exclusions, complaints about the delivery of the National Curriculum and the provision of collective worship and religious education.

Aims

To provide parents with an accessible and easily understood procedure for complaints. We would encourage parents to express their views at the earliest opportunity and through the appropriate channels. Parents should be assured that making a complaint would not adversely affect their child.

Procedure Stage One - Informal Complaint

1.1 The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight through the class teacher, the administration staff, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors depending on the nature of the complaint.

1.2 If the person first contacted cannot deal with the matter immediately it will be recorded with details of date, name, contact address or telephone number and the nature of the complaint.

1.3 In the majority of cases, the Headteacher may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage and the Headteacher (or designate) will respond by telephone or in person within 24 hours unless the complaint is received on a Friday afternoon when it will be dealt with on the Monday.

1.4 If the complaint relates to the Headteacher, the parent is advised to contact the Chair of Governors.

1.5 Complaints made informally to governors will be referred to the Headteacher or to the Chair of Governors where appropriate.

1.6 The person dealing with the complaint must make clear to the parent what action/monitoring of the situation will take place, putting this in writing only if this seems the best way of making things clear.

1.7 Where no satisfactory solution has been found the parents will be advised of how they can make a formal complaint.

Stage Two - Formal Complaint to the Headteacher

2.1 When a formal complaint is made, it will be acknowledged in writing within 3 working days.

2.2 The Headteacher (or designate) acknowledges the complainant in writing within 3 working days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target day for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be within 10 working days: if this proves impossible, a letter is sent explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.

2.3 The Headteacher (or designate) provides an opportunity for the complainant to meet with them to supplement any information provided previously. It is made clear to the complainant that if they wish

St. Michael's CE (Cont) Infant School

they may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative representative, or advocate who can speak on their behalf, and asked if they have any special requirements the school needs to be aware of e.g. wheelchair access, signing etc.

2.4 If necessary the Headteacher (or designate) should interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed. Pupils would normally be interviewed with parents/guardian present. In some situations circumstance may prevent this e.g. where this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious/urgent complaint or where particular circumstances mean that a pupil has specifically said they would prefer that parents or guardians were not involved. In such circumstances another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should be asked to attend. If a member of staff is complained against, the needs of that person should be borne in mind.

2.5 The Headteacher (or designate) must keep written records of meeting, telephone conversations and any other relevant documentation.

2.6 Once all relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher (or designate) should then produce a written response to the complainant, or may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly.

2.7 A written response will include a full explanation of the decisions and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this includes what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant is advised that should s/he wish to take the complaint further s/he should notify the Chair of Governors within 5 weeks of receiving the outcome letter.

2.8 If the complaint is against the Headteacher, or if the Headteacher has been very closely involved at stage 1, the Governors Complaints Panel should consider carrying out all the stage 2 procedures.

Stage Three - Formal Complaint to Governors

3.1 Upon receipt of a written request by the complainant for the complaint to proceed to stage 3, the procedures outlined below will be followed.

3.2 The Clerk to the Governing body should write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request. The acknowledgement should inform the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by three members of the school's Governing Body within 20 working days of receiving the complaint. The letter should also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. These must be received in time for the documents to be received by the full members.

3.3 The Clerk to the Governors should arrange to convene a Governor's Complaints Panel elected from the members of the Governing Body.

3.4 The Clerk to the Governors will ensure that the Panel hears the complaint within 20 working days of receiving the letter in 3.1. All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint will be given to the members of the governor's complaints panel. If the correspondence is extensive, the Chair of the Panel may prepare a thorough summary to send to the panel members.

3.5 The Clerk to the Governors will write and inform the complainant, Headteacher, any relevant witnesses, and members of the Panel at least 5 working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification to the complainant should also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/advocate/interpreter. This letter will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the Panel.

St. Michael's CE (Cont) Infant School

3.6 If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

3.7 The meeting will allow for:

- The complainant to explain their complaint and the Headteacher to explain the school's response
- The Headteacher to question the complainant about the complaint and the complainant the Headteacher and/or other members of staff about the school's response.
- Panel members to have the opportunity to question both the complainant and the Headteacher
- Any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair) and all parties having the right to question all witnesses
- Final statements by both the complainant and the Headteacher

3.8 The Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and the Headteacher that the panel will now consider its decision, and a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days. The complainant, Headteacher, other members of staff and witnesses will then leave.

3.9 The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and (a) reach a unanimous, or at least majority, decision on the complaint and (b) and decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint and (c) where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

3.10 A written statement outlining the decision of the Panel must be sent to the complainant and Headteacher. The letter to the complainant should explain whether a further appeal can be made, and if so, to whom.

Stage Four – Complaint to the Secretary of State for Education

A complaint may be made to the Secretary of State for Education if a person believes a governing body or LA is acting unreasonably or is failing to carry out its statutory duties properly. Details on how to make a complaint can be found online at <https://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolperformance/school-complaints-form>

Scope: This policy applies to staff, parents and governors.

This policy will be reviewed every two years and updated as necessary This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Single Equality Policy

Hampshire Guidance - Developing a general complaints procedure

Agreed by Governors: January 2015

Review Date: January 2017