



# Complaints Policy

*Reviewed January 2026*

## 1. PRINCIPLES

As a Church of England School, Christian values are at the heart of all we do. We value our relationship with parents and all members of the school and local community. No organisation or school operates perfectly all the time, so comments or complaints will occur. If you have a concern, we want to know about it so that it can be dealt with immediately. They provide important feedback or an indication that some practices may need to change in order to raise standards. All concerns and complaints will be considered seriously. Most issues can be dealt with easily and quickly, but to ensure all concerns are handled effectively the Governing Body has adopted the following complaints policy and procedure.

Please read these guidance notes before raising a complaint.

### PART 1: Guidance Notes

#### 1. Who can make a complaint?

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the school about any provision of facilities or services. It is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

#### 2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or lack of action'.

It is expected that all concerns and complaints will be referred to the school in the first instance, and that they will be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal

procedures. Formal procedures will be used when the initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

### 3. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. It may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, if they have appropriate consent to do so. Part 2 of this document explains the procedure in more detail. Concerns are best dealt with informally by speaking to a teacher or the Headteacher. Complaints are more formal and best set out in writing to avoid any misunderstandings.

Concerns should be raised with the class teacher in the first place. If you are not happy with the response, you should then raise it with the Headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure.

Complaints should normally be made to the Headteacher via the school office. Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office. Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office.

Please do not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints at a later stage, which could delay getting a resolution.

For each of use, a complaint form is included at the end of this policy. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like Citizens Advice to help you.

We will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure, for instance by providing information in alternative forms, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

### 4. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

### 5. Time scales

It is in everyone's interest, particularly that of the child, for concerns and complaints to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred,

within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame only in exceptional circumstances and only if it is still possible to give a fair hearing to all parties involved.

Complaints will not usually be able to be considered if the child no longer attends the school as we may no longer have access to the child's school records.

The school will aim to respond to the complaint within the timescales given in Part 2. In certain circumstances it may be inappropriate or impracticable to keep to these timescales, for example, due to the illness of a key person, if a complaint is received shortly before the end of term and the investigation cannot be conducted immediately because of the school holidays, or if the complaint is particularly complex.

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If it becomes necessary to alter time limits and deadlines, you will be given an explanation as to why and when you will receive a response.

## 6 Scope of Complaints

This procedure should be used for complaints relating to the schooling of a child, about the education and care provided to pupils at the school or about the school's operational arrangements. Some issues have associated statutory procedures and cannot be dealt with under our complaints procedure. These include, but are not limited to, the issues listed below. If the complaint falls into any of these circumstances, the Headteacher will be able to advise as to the correct procedure to be followed.

### This procedure cannot be used for:

- Admissions to schools
- Criminal behaviour
- Complaints about the actions of another parent
- Complaints by staff relating to grievances about their employment
- Data protection
- Discrimination
- Exclusion of children from school
- Fines for unauthorised absences
- Issues between the school and community groups
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation
- National Curriculum - content
- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs
- School re-organisation proposals
- Staff conduct
- Staff grievances
- Whistleblowing

Organisations who use the school premises or facilities should have their own procedure to deal with complaints. You should raise any concerns or complaints about their services directly with them.

If other public bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to keep to the timescales and may result in the procedure being suspended until they have completed their investigations.

If at any stage of the process you start legal action in relation to the matter under consideration, the complaints process will automatically cease and all further correspondence will be with the school's legal representatives.

## 7 Confidentiality

Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also. In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, complainants should not discuss their complaints publicly via social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

## 8 Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, we want to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint;
- an apology;

It may also be the case that the complaint may not have any substance and is therefore considered unfounded or unsubstantiated.

Complainants are encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. These should be specific, relevant and achievable. A complaint seeking a result beyond the examples given above is outside the terms of this complaints procedure and the complainant should contact the Headteacher for guidance on the relevant statutory procedures.

## 9 Withdrawal of complaint

If you wish to withdraw your complaint we will ask you to confirm this in writing.

## 10 Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Unreasonable behaviour is that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on;
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with;
- uses threat to intimidate;
- uses abrasive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
- knowingly provides falsified information;
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached. Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be and carried out in accordance with the Department for Education – Best practice guidance for Schools Complaints Procedures, as updated in January 2021.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school premises.

If the school receives several similarly worded complaints about the same issue, these will be regarded as a campaign against the school. The complaint will be investigated but the school may respond by a standard letter to all complainants or by an announcement on the school website.

#### 11 Use of AI to generate a complaint

While we acknowledge that the use of AI to generate a complaint may enable a less confident person to articulate their complaint, government guidance is to use AI with caution as it doesn't always get it right when citing laws and can make a complaint more complex than necessary. Among the common issues found are:

- The use of legally sounding language to quote extracts from legislation which is often out of date, incorrect, incomplete or not relevant;
- The use of impersonal language which can sound aggressive and threatening;
- Excessively long documents containing questions which are not directly relevant to the complaint;
- The making of unreasonable demands and in unreasonable timescales.

These can be regarded as unreasonable behaviour and will be dealt with as such.

#### 12 Recording and Monitoring

A record will be kept of all meetings and telephone calls relating to the complaint, any response given and what actions have been proposed. These records will be held in a central file. At least once a year the Governing Body will monitor the number and nature of complaints received and will review the outcomes to ensure the effectiveness of the complaints procedure and make any changes where necessary. The monitoring will not identify any individuals but may identify any underlying issues which need to be addressed.

## **PART 2: THE STAGES OF COMPLAINTS**

### **INFORMAL STAGE 1: SPEAK TO THE CLASS TEACHER**

If you have any concerns about the school or the education the school provides, the matter should be discussed with the child's class teacher in the first instance. This is usually the best and quickest way of resolving issues.

You should make an appointment to speak to the class teacher. This will give them the opportunity to talk about the issue in an appropriate manner and without interruption. Schools are busy organisations and it may not be possible to offer an appointment straight away but it will be done at the earliest convenient time.

The purpose of the meeting will be to establish the nature of the concern and to seek a realistic resolution to the problem. The class teacher will make a brief written record of the concern raised and any actions agreed.

If you are not happy with the outcome of Stage 1, you should ask for an appointment to meet with headteacher unless the complaint is about the Headteacher, in which case the procedure moves straight to Formal Stage 1.

### **INFORMAL STAGE 2: SPEAK TO THE HEADTEACHER**

The purpose of the meeting will be to establish the nature of the on-going concern, what has been discussed with class teacher so far, and any actions arising from it.

It is in everyone's interest, particularly that of the child, for concerns to be worked out quickly and smoothly. However, the Headteacher will need to look into what has happened since the initial meeting before they can suggest how the concern might be resolved. If this is the case, they will agree how and within what timescale they will contact you to let you know the outcome of their enquiries and what action they have taken or propose to take.

The Headteacher will make a brief written record of concerns discussed and what action has been agreed, and will write to you summarising this.

It is hoped that most problems will have been resolved at this stage through the informal process. If not, you may raise a formal complaint.

### **FORMAL STAGE 1: REFERRAL TO THE HEADTEACHER**

If you have not resolved your issue by informal means, or you wish to refer it directly to a formal process it is helpful if you can give a brief outline of your concern on the school's complaints form.

Unless your complaint is about, or involves the Headteacher you should contact the Headteacher. The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 school days. The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should contact the Chair of Governors c/o the school. The Chair of Governors will normally investigate the complaint but may ask one of other governors if they have better experience dealing with issues raised.

If your complaint is about or involves a governor, you should contact the Clerk to the governing body c/o the school. If the complaint is about the Chair or an individual governor, the Clerk will appoint a suitably skilled governor to investigate the complaint. If it involves the Chair and Vice Chair jointly or the majority or all of the governing body, the Clerk will appoint an independent investigator. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 school days.

During the investigation, the investigator will, if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish. The investigator will keep a written record of any meetings and interviews in relation to the investigation.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Headteacher or investigator, as appropriate, will provide a formal written response within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If we are unable to meet this deadline, we will provide you with an update and revised response date. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome at Formal Stage 1 you may ask for your complaint to be considered at Formal Stage 2 by a complaints committee of the governing body by writing to the Clerk of the Governors c/o the school. This request must be received within 5 school days of date of latter advising outcome of Formal Stage 1. Requests received outside this time frame will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

#### FORMAL STAGE 2: REFERRAL TO A COMPLAINTS PANEL

The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of your request within 5 school days of receiving it and will convene the panel hearing. The panel will consist of three governors who have not previously been involved in dealing with the complaint. If the school is unable to find three governors, it has agreements in place whereby it can call upon governors from other schools or from the Local Authority. The panel will aim to meet within 15 school working days; however, as the governors act in a voluntary capacity and may have business and personal commitments there may be occasions when this is not possible, in which case the Clerk will advise you accordingly and the panel will meet at the earliest possible time.

The Clerk will advise you of the date for the hearing. If you are unable to attend the hearing you should immediately advise the Clerk who will endeavour to arrange another hearing at

more convenient time. If you reject the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the hearing. It will then proceed in your absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

Any supporting documentation from either you or the school must be received by the Clerk no later than 5 school working days before the hearing takes place, and copies will be sent to all involved in the hearing at least 3 school working days before the hearing.

The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded. If any documents are received after this time, the panel will decide whether to accept them or not.

You do not have to attend the hearing, in which case the hearing will proceed on the basis of written submissions. If you do attend, you are entitled to bring someone along for support. This can be a relative or friend. As the hearing is formal but not a legal court of law, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting.

However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate – for instance, if a school employee is called as a witness, they may be supported by union and/or legal representation. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

Supporting witnesses or representatives may attend with either you or the Headteacher, but the Clerk should be notified no later than 5 school working days before the hearing to ensure that the venue can accommodate everyone.

The committee will also not review any new complaints or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure. The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. In this case the school will make appropriate arrangements, and prior knowledge and consent of all parties must be sought. Consent will be required to be recorded in any minutes taken.

At the end of the hearing the panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and will reach a majority decision on the complaint. The committee can uphold the complaint in whole or in part or dismiss the complaint in whole or in part. If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint and where appropriate recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Clerk will write to you and the Headteacher informing you of their decision and the reasons for it of the panel within 5 school working days of the hearing. In the case of a complex complaint, the panel will panel may need more time to consider the complaint. You will be advised as to when a decision will be made.

### **PART 3: FURTHER ACTION**

The Governing Body Appeal Panel marks the end of the school's complaints process. If you are not satisfied they can contact the Secretary of State for Education or Ofsted.

#### **Complaints to DfE**

You will need to complete the school complaints procedure before you complain to DfE unless one of the following applies:

- a child is not getting an education;
- a child has been exposed to harm;
- the school is stopping you from following its complaints procedure.

DfE has the power to consider complaints that the governing body has acted unreasonably in the discharge of its statutory duties. They cannot overturn the decision made by the panel but can require the school to reconsider the appeal. They may use the information you provide to recommend improvements to the school policies.

DfE cannot deal with complaints about:

- fines for taking holidays in term time;
- lack of compensation or apologies from the school;
- the behaviour of school staff.

#### **Complaints to Ofsted**

The Chief Inspector (Ofsted) has the power to investigate complaints about the school as a whole with regard to standards of education, pupil welfare and school management, but will only investigate cases to do with individual pupils in exceptional circumstances. They will read your complaint and may use the information you've provided to help them decide what areas to focus their next inspection on.

Ofsted cannot:

- resolve issues between you and the school;
- ask the school to respond directly to your complaint or take action on it;
- change the outcome of a complaint;
- change the school's complaints process because of a complaint.

#### **Further advice**

Parents may also seek advice from the Department of Education or the Advisory Centre for Education.

The school can provide details on how to contact these organisations should the complainant feel it necessary.

ST PETER'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

# COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return to the Headteacher / Chair of Governors / Clerk to the Governing Body (as appropriate) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name	Name of pupil (if relevant):  Relationship to pupil (if relevant):
Address / email:	
Postcode:	
Telephone (day):	Telephone (evening):
Please give details of your complaint and how has it affected you?	

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please list below:

Have you discussed this matter with a member of staff before filling in this form? If so, who did you speak to and what was the response?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Signature:

Date:

Official use only:

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:.....

on: