



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. If you have a concern, we want to know about it so that it can be dealt with immediately. Most concerns can be dealt with easily and quickly but to ensure all concerns are handled effectively, the Governing Body has adopted a complaints policy and procedure.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The procedure is designed to ensure that wherever possible, an informal resolution is attempted. All stages of the complaints procedure should be investigatory rather than adversarial. To allow for a proper investigation, complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. It is difficult to investigate properly an incident or problem which is more than a day or two old. Any complaint which is raised more than three months after the event will not be considered except in exceptional circumstances. All complaints will be treated as confidential and only those individuals concerned with investigating the complaint will have access to the information. No information regarding the investigation will be made available publicly unless required by law.

If at any stage a parent/carer should wish to withdraw their complaint for any reason they may do so.

DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

A complaint is a clear expression of dissatisfaction, however made, by a person or persons with a legitimate interest in the school or children's centre (but not being employed at the school or children's centre or on the governing body) about the standard of teaching, the conduct, actions, or lack of action, of members of the teaching or non-teaching staff employed at the school or children's centre and anybody else working under the direction of the Headteacher, which affects an individual or group. Complaints about persons outside of the school or children's centre will initially be dealt with by the Headteacher as site manager and be referred to the appropriate authority.

ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

There is no duty for Headteachers or Governors to pursue anonymous complaints because there is no named complainant to respond to. However, if such complaints allege or imply a serious matter that may be to the detriment of the school or children's centre, then it will be at the Headteacher's or Chair of Governor's discretion to consider whether a case needs further investigation or not. Further investigation may be carried out in exceptional

circumstances such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school would involve appropriate external agencies.

VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

There will be occasions when, on proper investigation a complaint is deemed to be unfounded, malicious or vexatious or when despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to reopen the same issue. In these circumstances the Chair of the Governing Body will inform the complainant in writing that the complaint is deemed to be unfounded, malicious or vexatious and/or that the procedure has been exhausted, whichever is appropriate, and that the matter is closed. Where a complainant continues to be dissatisfied, even after the above measures have been taken, it may be advisable to ask for an officer from the Diocesan Board or LA to be present at a meeting.

COMPLAINTS FROM A CHILD

If a child raises a complaint, this may involve safeguarding issues. The complaint will need to be made by the parent/carer of the child, on their behalf.

STAGE 1: INFORMAL

At St Stephen's C of E Primary School and Children's Centre we aim to deal with all concerns and complaints in a positive and supportive manner.

Any concerns will be dealt with informally when you first make them known to the school or children's centre. In most cases we would expect the class teacher/children's centre manager to be the first point of contact, either by telephone or in person.

If the parent/carer wishes to meet with the teacher or children's centre manager, we respectfully ask them to make an appointment to discuss the situation. This ensures that:

1. We allocate sufficient time to listen carefully to your concerns.
2. Lessons can start on time and are uninterrupted.

If for any reason the teacher or children's centre manager is unable to meet with the parent/carer, he/she will either:

1. Arrange an alternative appointment.
2. Ask another teacher/member of staff to informally meet with the parent/carer.

If possible, we prefer all concerns to be dealt with as quickly as possible and to everyone's satisfaction. It is preferable for concerns to be handled without the need for formal

procedures. We pride ourselves on honest and genuine relationships with children, parents and members of our wider school community.

However, we do appreciate that there may be times when more formal procedures are required and we will treat all concerns with respect, good manners and in line with the school's Equality Policy. In most cases we hope that the teacher/children's centre manager will be the first contact and we will endeavour to resolve the issue as soon as is possible.

All concerns will be investigated with respect and integrity. Occasionally, these discussions may not resolve your concern, and if you are still dissatisfied, your next step is to make a formal complaint.

STAGE 2: FORMAL – WRITTEN COMPLAINT

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally by a member of staff, the parent should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Headteacher).

- You should put your complaint in writing to the School or Chair of Governors c/o the School and you will receive a written acknowledgement within two days. A complaints form, obtained from the office, will need to be completed to register formal consideration of your complaint. n.b. if assistance is needed to complete this form then the school office will provide it.
- You may be invited to discuss the matter with the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. Additionally, a more formal meeting may be arranged for you to speak to the staff member and to discuss the nature of any complaint. If you wish you may bring someone with you to this meeting.
- The Headteacher/Chair of Governors may undertake the investigation themselves or invite another staff member or Governor to carry out this investigation. The Headteacher/Chair of Governors will sign the letter that responds from the school to any investigation.
- Records will be kept of all meetings and phone conversations plus other related documents.
- Once all the relevant facts are established you will be sent a written response to the complaint. This will contain a full explanation for the decision taken and the reason for it. If follow-up action is needed, the school will tell you what it is proposing to do.
- The Headteacher/Chair of Governors will be available to meet with parents/carers concerning their complaint.

Investigation process:

- *there should be a clear understanding of the complaint, clarification should be sought if necessary;*
- *interviews should be held as soon as possible after the incident to minimise the possibility of evidence becoming tainted;*
- *strict attention should be paid to confidentiality;*
- *separate discussions should be held with all parties involved, and with any witnesses;*
- *careful written notes be made of all discussions;*
- *the complainant's desired outcome and any possibilities of redress discussed;*
- *written statements should be obtained where appropriate, and be signed and dated;*
- *if pupils are to be interviewed reference will be made to the relevant procedures for undertaking such interviews*
- *efforts should be made to resolve the complaint, if possible to the satisfaction of the complainant;*
- *complainant and member of staff should be given an opportunity to provide documentation and identify potential witnesses.*

After completing the investigation, the Headteacher/Chair of the Governing Body will prepare a written summary of his/her findings. He/she will write to you, informing you that the investigation has been completed and enclosing the summary of findings. His/her letter may include one of the following outcomes:

- *all appropriate steps have already been taken and s/he considers no further action is necessary;*
- *as a result of the investigation the following arrangements have been made..... which it is hoped the complainant will find satisfactory;*
- *the following recommendations will be made to the governing body*

If you have followed stage one and stage two and you are still not happy then you can move to stage three of the process.

STAGE 3: FORMAL – GOVERNORS’ COMPLAINTS PANEL

If you still have concerns and they have not been resolved, you may ask for your complaint to be considered by the complaints panel of the Governing Body by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body c/o the School.

You will be informed of the date, time and; place of the meeting by letter. The letter will also tell you what will happen at the meeting and explain that you can bring someone with you. Any member of staff directly involved in the complaint will also be invited to attend the meeting.

Generally, no new evidence or witnesses should be introduced at this time by any of the participants, but, previous witnesses may be called.

The meeting will be conducted in an informal manner but will ensure that everyone can detail their case without interruption.

The Clerk to the Governors will send you a written statement outlining the decision of the panel. The Panel’s decision is final.

FURTHER RIGHTS TO APPEAL

You may, if you believe the Governors’ complaints panel has acted unreasonably, or that the governors have not followed their own procedures in considering the complaint, make a complaint to the Department for Education using an on-line form.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/complaintsprocedure/b00212240/making-complaint-school>

Agreed by Governors
(Chair Signature): _____

Policy Due for Review: _____

COMPLAINTS FORM	
ST STEPHEN'S C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL AND CHILDREN'S CENTRE	
When we receive a written complaint, we aim to acknowledge its receipt within 2 days and send a full or interim response within 5 school days.	
Name of complainant:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone (day):	Telephone (evening):
What is your concern and how has it affected you?	
Are you attaching any paperwork: is 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 would you like to happen as a result of making this complaint?	
Signature:	Date:
Please return this form to the School office	