



St Paul's Church of England Primary School Complaints Policy

Adopted by: Children, Families and Communities Committee

On: 4th October 2017

Review: October 2021

We recognise that pupils learn best when there is an effective partnership between school and parents. We work actively to foster effective partnerships through regular communication, accessibility of the SLT and an open-door approach to communication. All members of the school community are entitled to have their points of view heard. We also acknowledge that unresolved complaints can result in unhealthy conflict.

This policy sets out the process for making a complaint, explains how they are heard and the process for resolution.

The process described in this policy has been put in place to ensure that:

- all parents, staff and governors know how to voice concerns and complaints;
- there are clear timescales to deal promptly with complaints;
- the school's attitude to a pupil would never be affected by a parental complaint;
- anonymous complaints are discouraged;
- the school is active in encouraging strong home-school links;
- any person complained about has equal rights with the person making the complaint;
- appropriate redress is achieved.

What is a complaint?

From time to time parents express concerns and these are dealt with as a matter of routine. Occasionally a parental concern may become more serious and develop into a complaint and be a clear statement of dissatisfaction. This may relate to a variety of issues including:

- the way in which an initial concern was handled;
- the conduct or actions of pupils;
- the action or lack of action of members of staff;
- inappropriate discipline;
- lack of information.

Complaints are not always easy to define. It is important to keep in mind the distinction between concerns and complaints as described above.

Concerns often arise through a lack of correct information. The school has systems for sharing information with parents regularly and at key points in a pupil's school 'career', in order to provide clear information and so to reduce parental concern. These systems include:

- Induction meetings for new parents (starting school in Nursery & Reception classes)
- Induction meeting for in-year admission parents

- Parent information packs for parents, with key school routines etc. produced and distributed for all parents whose children are joining the school
- Annual transition meetings for parents of pupils moving from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 and from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3
- Information shared on the school's website
- Half-termly newsletters and curriculum overview documents prepared by class teachers
- A termly Headteacher's newsletter (often more frequent)
- An email communication system to share details and events with parents
- Termly parents' evenings
- Circulation of core school dates at the start of each academic year
- A dynamic online school calendar – embedded in school website and printed within the headteacher's newsletter
- Senior staff on school gates every day
- Teachers and other school staff available in school playgrounds at the end of the school day

We recognise that communication is a two-way process and we ask all parents to contact the school directly if they are at all unsure about something. The school office team can address and forward concerns or queries as necessary.

We encourage parents to voice concerns to the school as soon after an issue has arisen as possible. This enables us to investigate and resolve concerns swiftly, before problems escalate. It is difficult to carry out a reliable investigation of an issue or problem if more than a few days have elapsed.

In order to ensure that concerns are addressed and resolved effectively we work confidentially. We ask parents to address their complaint in the same manner. Social media sites and blogs should not be used as a forum for airing complaints or sharing dissatisfaction. The stages of the complaints process provide opportunities to pursue a complaint if the complainant is dissatisfied.

Stages in the complaints procedure

It is normal for each stage in the complaints procedure to be completed before moving to the next stage. In very exceptional circumstances, the headteacher, usually in consultation with the Chair of Governors, may decide to omit a stage.

Stage 1 Informal

-Discussion of concerns with class teacher, or in the case of extended services with the service leader. If the concern is related to a service provided through a third-party agent letting the school's facilities, the concern should be raised using their complaints procedure;

-If unsatisfied, parents may ask to discuss concerns with the headteacher or a member of the SLT (school leadership team). Members of the SLT are available on the school gate at the start and end of day. Where a meeting is needed, it is convened within 10 school days of the request;

-If still unsatisfied parents may make a formal complaint in writing to the headteacher.

Stage 2 Formal

-On receipt of a formal complaint the headteacher, or designated member of staff, investigates. Acknowledgment of the receipt of a complaint is made within 3 school days (not applicable if the complaint is made orally).

-Investigation of the complaint often involves a meeting with the parents, usually within 7 school days or within a mutually agreed time.

-Headteacher notifies the outcome of investigation to parents, saying that if they are not satisfied, they may send a written complaint to the Chair of the governing body (this is administered through the school office). The headteacher may wish to refer the complaint to the Chair of Governors. This stage is usually completed within 10 school days.

-On receipt of a written complaint, the Chair of Governors or a designated governor acknowledges receipt and advises on investigation format (usually within 3 school days). The Chair of Governors or designated governor investigates the complaint (usually within 10 school days).

-The Chair of Governors sends a summary of the findings and a decision to the parents (usually within 5 school days). The parents are told that if they are not satisfied that they may ask the matter to be referred to the governors' Complaints Committee.

-The Governors' Complaints Committee considers the complaint. The complaint, head's/chair's report of investigation, and other relevant paperwork are sent to all taking part 5 school days before the meeting (usually within 15 school days).

-Decision of the governors' Complaints Committee notified to the parents. The committee's decision is final (within 2 days of committee meeting).

(School days referred to in the timescales above are only those days when pupils are attending school. Staff INSET days are excluded)

Once a formal complaint is received the headteacher and governors follow the procedure identified in:

- section 5.3 of *Working Together*, LDBS publication.
- Annex B of *School Complaints Procedure 2011*, DfE

Complaints and the investigation process will be handled in confidence.

Complaints about the headteacher should be made or sent to the Chair of Governors, who will investigate the matter.

Pupil Concerns and Complaints

Pupils are encouraged to share concerns and complaints with their class teacher or other school adult. Where a concern or complaint is associated with an improvement to the school's practices or infrastructure, it may be addressed to a member of the School Council.

Pupils are regularly reminded how to voice concerns and complaints in assemblies and through other curriculum opportunities. Ensuring children are aware of how and who to complain to is part of the school's monitoring process.

Publicising the Concerns/ Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure will be included in the induction process for parents when their child starts at the school. The policy will be made available on line and will be available as a hard copy on request from the school office. A copy of *Appendix B – Expressing a Concern, Notes for Parents*, from *Working Together* LDBS publication, will be sent to parents with the school newsletter, annually.

Source Documents:

Working Together, Guidance relating to General Parental Complaints in VA & Foundation Schools, LDBS & SDBE, 2nd Edition, September 2001
School Complaints Procedure, DfE 2011