



St Mary's CE Primary School, N8 7QN

Complaints Policy

Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12)

Our Vision

As we love, we flourish
As we flourish, we aspire
As we aspire, we achieve
Together, we are a family.

Friendship, Compassion, Hope, Wisdom,
Community, Endurance.

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1 Introduction

This procedure sets out how St Mary's Primary School deals with any complaints it receives.

1.1 Aims

The School's Complaint's Procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- Usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means.
- Be simple to use and understand;
- Treat complaints confidentially;
- Allow problems to be handled swiftly;
- Inform future practice so that the problem is unlikely to recur;
- Reaffirm the partnership between parents, staff and governors as they work together for the good of the pupils in the school;
- Ensure that the school's attitude to a pupil would never be affected by a parental complaint;
- Discourage anonymous complaints;
- Actively encourage strong home-school links;
- Ensure that all staff have opportunities to discuss and understand the school's response to concerns and complaints made by parents;
- Ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint;
- Regularly review its system for monitoring concerns and complaints received from parents.

1.2 Concern or complaint?

For the purpose of this policy a complaint is defined as 'an expression of significant or sustained dissatisfaction where a pupil, parent or carer seeks a specific action to address the issue'. A complaint is not the same as a concern.

A concern is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an important issue for which reassurances are sought". If you have a concern we would like you to tell us about it so that we can talk with you and see how best to resolve your concern. The majority of concerns can be resolved informally by speaking to a member of staff. See appendix i re: who to relay your concerns to.

After hearing your concern we will act as quickly as we can; we will let you know the timescale within which you will get a response.

1.3 What is not covered?

The scope of complaints can be far reaching. However, not all complaints can be resolved within the school. For the following, there are statutory procedures to be followed:

- complaints against the curriculum

- admissions and appeals
- appeals against statements of special educational needs; and
- appeals about exclusions
- matters likely to require Child Protection investigation

This procedure does not apply to internal disciplinary matters, internal grievances, staff whistleblowing, a third party who hires or uses the school premises or facilities and matters of school re-organisation.

2 Expressing a concern or making a complaint: Notes for parents

2.1 If you have a concern

We would like you to tell us about your concern so that we can talk with you and see how best to resolve it. The majority of concerns can be resolved informally by speaking to a member of staff, for example with regards to an incident. Whatever your concern, please know that we shall manage the resolution professionally and confidentially within the scope of the actions needed to resolve it.

Be assured that no matter what you wish to share with us, our support and respect for you and your child will not be affected in any way. Please do not delay telling us of your concern, as it is more difficult for us to effectively investigate an incident or problem which is more than a day or two old.

After hearing your concern, we will act as quickly as we can and will let you know the timescale within which you may expect a response. Please allow time for any action we may take to be effective. Please see Appendix i for who to talk to.

If you have a complaint

Our complaints procedure is in three stages outlined below:

2.2 Stage 1 (Informal) – Complain to Class Teacher (appendix ii)

Please contact your child's class teacher, or other appropriate member of staff either by emailing the school office or speaking to the teacher at the end of the school day, and arrange a time when you can discuss your complaint. It may be possible for you to see the member of staff straight away but normally it is better to make an appointment so that you can sit and talk things through calmly and clearly. It may be possible to give a response immediately, but where any investigation or information is required, a response will be given within five school days.

If, at this informal stage your complaint is about a member of staff and you feel unable to approach them, you can contact the school office (or speak to a member of staff on the gate) to arrange a time to discuss it with the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team

to discuss steps in resolving the complaint informally. Again, a response will be given within five school days

A Parent Concern proforma or a written record will be completed by the teacher at this meeting – see appendix ii.

2.3 Stage 2 (Informal) – Complain to a member of SLT (Deputy or Assistant Headteacher) (appendix ii)

Please contact the Senior Leader responsible for the site, either by emailing the school office or speaking to them at the end of the school day, and arrange a time when you can discuss your complaint and how you feel it has not been resolved. It may be possible for you to see the member of staff straight away but normally it is better to make an appointment so that you can sit and talk things through calmly and clearly. It may be possible to give a response immediately, but where any further investigation or information is required, a response will be given within five school days.

You may make a Stage 2 complaint if:

- you are not satisfied with the response to your Stage 1 complaint; or
- the complaint is about the member of staff

2.4 Stage 3 (Formal) - Complain to Headteacher (appendix iii)

You may make a Stage 3 complaint if:

- you are not satisfied with the response to your Stage 2 complaint; or
- the complaint is about the member of the SLT

A Stage 3 complaint should be directed to the Headteacher within 10 school days of receiving a response under Stage 2. Note that the Headteacher may nominate a member of the Senior Leadership Team, not the person who has dealt with Stage 2, to respond to a Stage 3 complaint on his/her behalf. At this stage, the complaint will need to be recorded on the complaint's recording form, (see Complaints Form Stage 3, attached below).

Sometimes another member of staff, unrelated to the complaint, will be present at the meeting to take notes. You are welcome to bring a friend/family member to the meeting provided the school has been informed prior to the meeting. After your discussion with the Headteacher/Senior Leader you may have to wait a short time while investigations are carried out, depending on the nature of your complaint. Every effort will be made to resolve the situation as quickly as possible and the Headteacher will send you a written response within 15 school days of your meeting. If it is not possible to respond within this timescale, the Headteacher will tell you when you can expect a response.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, the complaint should be directed to the Chair of the Governing Body at the FGB email address, that can be found at the school office. Note that the Chair of the Governing Body may nominate a non-staff member of the Governing Body to respond to a Stage 3 complaint on his/her behalf. Following receipt of a Stage 3 complaint regarding the Headteacher, the Governor will, as soon as reasonably practicable, take any steps

he/she considers appropriate to establish the facts in relation to the complaint. Once all the facts have been established, the Governor will produce a written response to all parties involved. This will be done within 15 school days.

2.5 Stage 4 (Formal) – Complain to the School Governing Body (appendix iv)

If the complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 3, you should write to the Clerk to the Governors c/o the FGB email address using the Complaint Form Stage 4 (see attached below). Copies of all previous letters etc relating to the complaint should be included.

When the Chair receives a complaint, efforts will be made to resolve this informally. If, however, this route is unsuccessful or the Chair considers it to be inadvisable, the Chair will convene a Governing Body Complaints Panel. The Complaints Panel will be formed of three governors who have had no prior involvement in the complaint.

The Governing Body Complaints Panel will meet with you to hear the details of your complaint. You may bring a friend to the meeting if you wish. The Governing Body Complaints Panel will also meet (either at the same time or separately) with the Headteacher and any others involved in the complaint. The meeting(s) will happen within 15 school days of the complaint being received by the Chair of the Governing Body.

Following the meeting, the panel will reply to you within 15 school days of the meeting taking place, stating:

- whether the panel uphold the complaint, in full or in part;
- the redress the panel is recommending, if any; and
- the reasons for their decision.

2.6 Further rights of appeal and withdrawal of a complaint

The complaints procedure does not include a further appeal to the Local Authority, but complainants who remain unsatisfied with the outcome may refer the complaint to the Secretary of State for Education who will only intervene where the Governing Body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so.

If the complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, they will be asked to confirm this in writing.

2.7 Complaints about Governors Stage 4 of complaint

Complaints about a governor should be referred to the Chair of Governors who will investigate and respond to the complainant. Any appeal against the Chair's response would be dealt with by the Governing Body Complaints Panel. Complaints about the Chair of Governors must be referred to the Clerk to Governors who would arrange for the complaint to be considered by the Governing Body Complaints Panel. Timings are the same as in Stage 3.

2.8 Table summarising procedures

This complaints procedure sets out how to make a complaint and the timescales within which the school will aim to respond. It is the school's intention to deal with all complaints as quickly and smoothly as possible. However, there will be circumstances in which it is not possible to

observe the timescales set out in this procedure. In those circumstances the school will keep you informed of any revised timescales and the reasons for any delay.

Stage	Description	Time-limit for School's response
Stage 1 informal	Discuss complaint with class teacher / relevant member of staff (See Parents Concern Form and flowchart – appendices i & ii)	As soon as possible but no later than 5 school days after any relevant facts have been established.
Stage 2 informal	Discuss complaint with member of the SLT responsible for the site (See Parents Concern Form and flowchart – appendices i & ii)	As soon as possible but no later than 5 school days after any review of facts and further investigation.
Stage 3 formal	Complain to Headteacher (or Chair of Governors if complaint is about the Headteacher) (See Complaints Form appendices iii)	As soon as possible but no later than 15 school days after any relevant facts have been established.
Stage 4 formal	Complain to the School Governing Body (See Complaints Form appendices iv)	Meeting(s) set up within 15 school days. Decision within 15 school days of the meeting.

Written records will be kept of all complaints – formal and informal – including whether they are resolved at a preliminary stage or a hearing. The correspondence and records of complaints are to be kept confidential except where a body conducting an inspection under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 or Secretary of State requests access to the records or other documents involved in the complaint.

3 Unreasonable, serial and persistent Complaints

The majority of complaints are managed positively and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant. However, there are rare occasions when complainants remain dissatisfied despite all stages of the procedures being followed and/ or behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns. This may be unreasonable, persistent or through harassment or aggression. The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the school and directly or indirectly the overall well-being of the children or staff in the school. In these exceptional circumstances the school may take action in accordance with this policy.

3.1 What does the school expect of any person wishing to raise a concern?

- The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:
- treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect;
- refrain from conversations in front of children and other members of the school community to avoid upset or distress;
- refrain from approaching parents and children directly;
- respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;

- refrain from the use of violence, or threats of violence, towards people or property; refrain from any aggression or verbal abuse;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- follow the school's complaints procedure
- If a complainant makes an allegation or serious complaint outside of the school's complaints procedures, it is important the Headteacher follows up on this.
- The Headteacher will:
- Write to the complainant and invite them to discuss the matter further and the procedures for making a complaint.
- Follow up with another letter in the situation that the complainant does not respond, closing the matter.

3.2 What do we mean by 'unreasonably complainants'?

For the purpose of this policy, an unreasonable complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include persons who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner.

Unreasonable behaviour may include the following (not an exhaustive list):

- actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint;
- uses Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably;
- an insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes;
- an insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- an insistence on only dealing with the Headteacher on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters;
- an insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the school because it is unlawful;
- abusive or threatening behaviour or language towards school staff;
- Posting anything relating to the complaint or any opinions about the staff, pupils or parents at the school on social media or on-line.

3.3 What is harassment?

We regard harassment as including the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress, rather than to seek a resolution.

Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:

- it appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause;
- the way in which a complaint or other issue is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others; it has an unjustifiably significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

- the purpose or effect is creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

3.4 School's responses to unreasonable complaints or harassment

In cases of unreasonable complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;
- require any future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present and if felt necessary with an officer from the Diocesan Board or Local Authority. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication;
- consider taking advice about putting in place a specific procedure for dealing with complaints from the complainant, e.g., she/he will not be able to deal directly with the Headteacher, but only with a third person to be identified by the governing board, who will investigate, determine whether or not the complaint is reasonable, and then advise the Headteacher accordingly.

NB: The school must satisfy itself that it has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's issues and has given a clear statement of the school's position and the complainant's options (if any).

- Legitimate new complaints will always be considered in an appropriate time frame, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the above. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals whose conduct falls within the scope of this policy.

3.5 Physical or verbal aggression

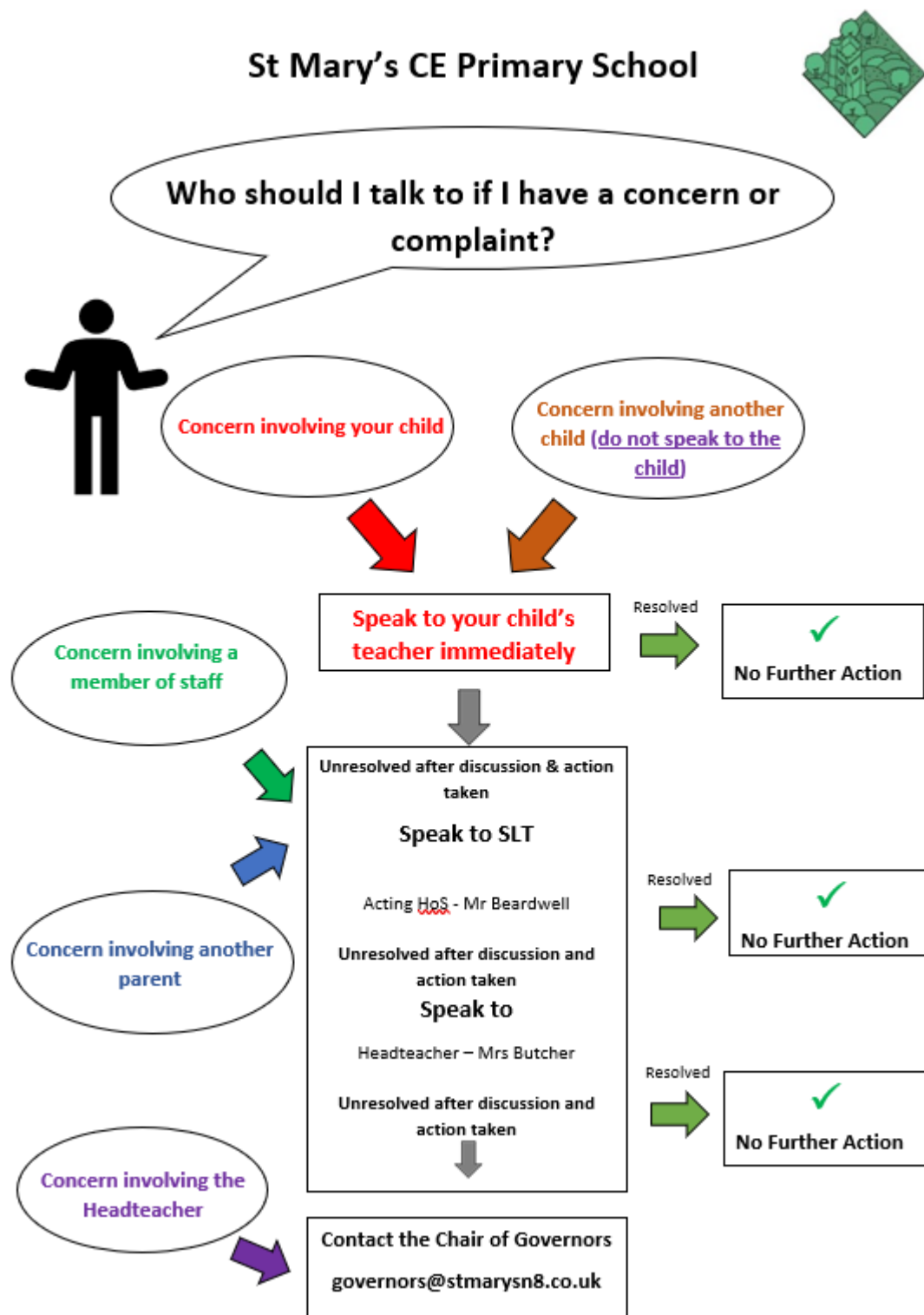
The governing body will not tolerate **any** form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community. If there is evidence of any such aggression the school may:

- ban the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;
- take advice on requesting an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO);
- take legal advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation;
- call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996.

See Managing Parents and Visitors Behaviour Policy

3.6 Right of appeal

All persons who are notified by the school that they are being dealt with under this procedure have the right of appeal. Appeals must be addressed to the Chair of Governors under confidential cover, care of the school. The Chair of Governors will consider each appeal on its merits, consulting with the Headteacher as appropriate. The outcome of the appeal should be notified to the appellant and copied to the Headteacher within 10 working days of receipt.



Parental Concern Form 2024-25

This form should be used if a parent or carer raises a concern. You should keep a note of all issues, actions and outcomes.

Name of Parent/carer	
Name of Child	
Year / Class	
Outline the concern (note dates and times as necessary)	
Action already taken by you /school	
Agreed next steps	

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

SLT made aware - Signed: _____ **(SLT)** **Date:** _____

Stage 3 Complaints Form – St Mary’s CE Primary School

Stage 3 - Complaints to the Headteacher:

If you feel you have been unable to resolve your complaint through speaking to your child’s class teacher or other appropriate member of staff and wish to take the matter further, please complete this form and send it to the Headteacher. If your complaint is against the Headteacher you will need to send the form to the Chair of the Governing Body; this can be done via the school office. If you have any issues with completing the form, please discuss your complaint with the school office and they will record the complaint for you and give you a copy for your records.

Your Name:			
Address:			
		Post Code	
Telephone Number (Home):			
Telephone Number (Day):			
Telephone Number (Mobile):			

Name of Child	
Date of Birth of Child	

What are the details of your complaint?

Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

When did you discuss your concern/complaint with the appropriate members of staff?

Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

What was the result of the discussions?

Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

Signed:

Date:

Stage 4 Complaints Form – St Mary’s CE Primary School

Stage 4 Complaints to the School Governing Body:

If you continue to feel your complaint is unresolved, you may take your complaint to the School Governing Body. You must have gone through Stage 1 (Complaint to Class Teacher), Stage 2 (Complaint to SLT) and Stage 3 (Complaint to Head Teacher) as appropriate, prior to completing a Stage 4 complaint form.

Please fill in this form and send it to the Chair of Governors, via the School Office. If you have any issues with completing the form, please discuss your complaint with the school office and they will record the complaint for you and give you a copy for your records.

Your Name:			
Address:			
		Post Code	
Telephone Number (Home):			
Telephone Number (Day):			
Telephone Number (Mobile):			

Name of Child	
Date of Birth of Child	

What are the details of your complaint and how have they been dealt with in Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the Complaints process.

Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

What was the result of outcomes of the Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints

Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

Is there any further information you would like to provide the Governing Body about your Complaint that will help in investigating the matter fully.

Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

Signed:

Date: