

St Mark's C of E Aided Primary School

Complaints Policy

At St Mark's, we are continually striving to improve our school, and the input of parents and carers is invaluable. We recognise that concerns may arise, and this policy sets out our approach to dealing with those concerns, whatever they may be.

If as a parent or carer you have any concerns about the school, we want you to feel that you can tell us about them. Please be assured that, whatever your concern, it will in no way affect how your child is treated in school. We would be grateful if you could share any concerns with the school as soon as possible after an incident has occurred. It can be very difficult to investigate thoroughly if a significant amount of time has passed.

Most concerns can be addressed by the class teacher through an informal process (Stage 1), and this is recognised in this policy. We also recognise that this may not always resolve issues and concerns, and this policy also provides clear guidelines (Stages 2 to 5) should such a situation arise.

Please note that in this document the word 'parent' is used to assume anyone with parental responsibility or daily care of a child.

Stage 1 – Informal concerns.

1. Parents should discuss their concerns with the class teacher who will clarify the nature of the concern and reassure them that the school wants to hear about it. The teacher may be able to resolve the issue immediately.
2. If the teacher cannot deal with the problem directly, he/she will make a note of the date and details, agree to investigate and indicate how they will inform the parent of the outcome.
3. If the concern is sufficiently serious or the teacher is unsure how to handle the matter, he/she will discuss it with the Headteacher or senior member of staff.
4. At this stage the Headteacher may wish to contact the parent directly.
5. If no long-term satisfactory solution is agreed, the parent may contact the Headteacher for further discussion.
6. If the concern relates to the Headteacher, the parent should contact the Chair of Governors whose name and contact address can be obtained from the school office.

Stage 2 – Referral to the Headteacher.

1. If the concern is not resolved through talking to the Headteacher, it can be put in writing to the Headteacher.
2. The Headteacher will acknowledge the written complaint orally or in writing within 3 working days.
3. After investigation, the Headteacher will arrange to meet the parent. The Headteacher will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other relevant documentation including how the issue was resolved.
4. Where it is appropriate, a written response will confirm the outcome of the meeting.
5. Should there not be a satisfactory outcome, the parent will be informed that he/she should put the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors.

Stage 3 – Involvement of the Chair of Governors.

1. On receipt of a written complaint, the Chair of Governors will discuss the matter with the Headteacher and make a written response to the parent, offering a meeting if necessary.
2. If a meeting is held, the Chair of Governors will invite both parent and Headteacher to put forward their views on the issue.
3. The Chair of Governors will attempt to reach an amicable solution with those present. If an amicable solution can not be reached then either party may request a hearing under Stage 4 below.

Stage 4 – Review by the Governing Body.

1. Upon receipt of a written formal complaint, the Clerk to the Governing Body will acknowledge receipt of the letter. The complainant will be informed that the complaint will be heard by a panel of three members of the Governing Body within 20 working school days of receiving the complaint. The clerk will arrange a suitable date and time for the hearing.
2. The panel must consist of three governors with no prior knowledge of the complaint, with one of them taking the role of Chair. The Headteacher should not sit on the panel.
3. Both the complainant and the Headteacher will provide the clerk with any documentation to be used at the hearing, and the names and addresses of any witnesses to be called, at least 5 days before the hearing takes place.
4. The clerk will distribute all documentation to both parties and to members of the panel at least three days before the hearing.
5. Both parties will be advised by the clerk that they may be accompanied by a friend or representative at the hearing. The name of whom should be advised

to the clerk no less than 5 days before the meeting. If a translation service is required, the clerk must be notified at least 14 days in advance of the meeting

6. The involvement of staff other than the Headteacher is at the discretion of the panel Chair.
7. The aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve a reconciliation between school and complainant. However, it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that the complaint has been taken seriously.
8. Some parents may be unused to speaking to a group of people in a formal situation. The Chair should therefore ensure that proceedings are kept as informal as possible.
9. The procedure to be followed at the hearing is as follows:
 - The panel will have agreed a chair for the meeting and made arrangements for a note taker to be present.
 - Both parties, together with their friend/representative enter the hearing.
 - The Chair explains the purpose of the meeting and introduces those present.
 - The person calling the hearing presents their case calling on witnesses, if any, to support their case.
 - The panel and respondent have an opportunity to question witnesses and the person calling the hearing.
 - The respondent presents their case calling on witnesses, if any.
 - The respondent and witnesses can be questioned by the panel and the other party.
 - If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence, the meeting will adjourn so that both sides have time to consider the new evidence.
 - Both parties sum up their case.
 - Both parties withdraw.
 - The panel considers the case, reaches a unanimous or majority decision and then writes to both parties within seven days to advise them of their findings. If necessary, changes to the school's procedures will be recommended to ensure that the same situation does not arise again.
 - The letter to the complainant should also detail to whom any further appeals can be made.
10. The panel does not have any disciplinary powers. Should it reach the conclusion that there is a possibility that an employee may have behaved unprofessionally, the matter should be referred to the Head Teacher or the Chair of Governors who will consult with appropriate officers of the L.E.A. or Diocesan Board of Education.

Stage 5 – Appeal to the Local Education Authority and/or Secretary of State.

1. The complainant has the right of appeal to the Local Education Authority **ONLY** in the case of complaints about statutory provision and will be advised of their rights. In cases of **general** complaints about the school, the complainant may pursue their complaint with the Secretary of State.
2. Relevant departments of the LEA which may be able to offer advice or support are:
 - County Secretary's Office
 - Press Office
 - Area School Improvement Officer at Local Education Office
 - Education Personnel Service
 - County Education Officer at The Castle, Winchester

Agreed by governors: **Summer 2016**
Review: **Summer 2019**