

Complaints Policy

“What does the Lord ask of you? To act justly, to love
mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

(Micah 6:8)

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1. Introduction

1.1 In our school, our Christian vision shapes all that we do. All members of the school community are committed to upholding the St Michael's Church of England Christian values:

- To show love, care and kindness to all in our community
- To value what we have and to share with others
- To enable everyone to achieve their full potential

1.2 It is in everyone's interests that concerns are resolved/clarified at the earliest possible stage. Where concerns are raised the school will work with the individual who raised the concern to identify what would resolve the situation and then endeavour to find a resolution at the earliest opportunity.

1.3 In accordance with **Section 29 of the Education Act 2002**, all local authority maintained schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

1.4 Initial concerns should be dealt with by an appropriate member of staff. These should be taken seriously, and every effort made to resolve matters as quickly as possible. In certain cases, it may be appropriate to forward these to the headteacher (or to the Chair of Governors, if the complaint is about the headteacher).

1.5 Where it is not possible to resolve concerns informally, the formal complaints procedure can be accessed.

1.6 This document outlines how complaints will be dealt with under the Formal Complaints Policy.

1.7 Complainants will always be given the opportunity to complete the complaints process in full, regardless of whether it is felt that the complaint is justified or not.

1.8 If the complaints process is ongoing and further enquiries are received regarding the same subject, we will not respond to the new enquires/complaints. This is because it is unhelpful to have more than one investigation ongoing which duplicate the issues being investigated.

2. Complaints About Services Provided by External Bodies Using a School's Premises

2.1 Where the school has third party providers offering community facilities or services through the school premise, or using school facilities, the providers must have their own complaints procedure in place. Any complaints made concerning third party providers will be dealt with under their own procedures. The governing board will ensure that providers have the correct processes in place to deal with any concerns or complaints and any issues should be raised with the provider directly.

3. Who Can Make a Complaint?

3.1 Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides, unless statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions, a list is included within the next section).

4. Exclusions to The Complaints Procedure

4.1 The following issues will not be subject to the school's complaints procedure as they are outside of the school's jurisdiction:

- admission to schools
- exclusions from school
- special educational needs (SEN Tribunal)
- statutory proposals for school re-organisation
- claims for damages
- staff grievance or disciplinary matters
- child protection issues
- claims for damages

4.2 Complaints made against school staff will be considered, however where it is determined that matters should be dealt with under the school's grievance and disciplinary procedures complainants will not be informed of the outcome.

4.3 Where a complaint relates to the behaviour of a pupil this may be subject to the school's conduct and disciplinary procedures and the detail will remain confidential to the school and the parents of the child involved.

4.4 Complainants can be assured that the complaints will be investigated fully but due to data protection information will not be shared with them in these circumstances.

4.5 Where complaints concern child protection matters these should be raised with the school but will not usually be considered as a formal complaint where there is likely to be a Child Protection Investigation.

4.6 Where a complaint is received which should not be dealt with as a formal complaint the school will write to the complainant to advise them of this and the reason for the decision. The school will confirm the correct process to be followed.

5. Accessibility

5.1 The school will ensure that the formal complaints procedure:

- is easily accessible and publicised both within the school and available on the school website
- is simple to understand and use
- is impartial and in the spirit of working together co-operatively to reach the best resolution for everyone
- respectful of confidentiality for all

6. Time Limit for Making a Complaint

6.1 In general, any matter which is raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of, will not be considered.

7. Recording Complaints

7.1 Complaints should be made on the form provided by the school; this is to ensure that there is an accurate record of the complaint and it is clearly understood. However, if complainants are unable to complete this form, complaints will be accepted in the following ways:

- in person
- by telephone

- or in writing

7.2 When a formal complaint is received the school will write to the complainant within 5 school days to confirm what will happen next and the anticipated timescales.

8. Keeping People Informed

8.1 Each stage of the complaints process has agreed timescales which should be adhered to. If for any reason this is not possible the school/governing board will write to the complainant to explain the reasons and confirm when the action will be completed.

9. Stages of The Complaints Process

9.1 The following outlines the stages of the formal complaints procedure, at the end of each stage of the procedure complainants will be advised of how to progress to the next stage if they remain dissatisfied with the way in which the investigation has been conducted.

9.2 Formal stage one: a formal complaint will be investigated by the headteacher or person nominated by the headteacher. The investigation will be completed within 10 school days and at the end of the investigation a full written response will be sent to the complainant.

9.3 If the formal complaint is about the headteacher, this will be dealt with by the Chair of Governors.

9.4 Formal stage two: if stage one has been completed and the complainant remains dissatisfied with how the investigation was conducted the complaint can be referred to a panel of governors. The request for stage 2 should be made to the Clerk to Governors within 10 school days of receiving the stage 1 response in writing.

9.5 The governing board panel will be independent and made up of three members of the governing board who have had no awareness or involvement with the complaint previously.

9.6 The panel will carry out a review of the investigation which has been completed at stage one.

9.7 The request to progress to stage 2 should include a statement from the complainant which clearly states why they remain dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation. If the reasons are not clear the Chair of Governors will write to the complainant to request the additional information required to review the complaint or consider inviting the complainant to attend the panel to present their views in person. The Panel will not usually consider any new issues and will review the investigation that has taken place at stage 1. The request to progress to stage 2 should be requested within 10 school days of receiving the stage 1 response.

9.8 Complainants have the right to request an independent panel if they believe that there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The School will consider approaching a different school to ask for help or contact the local Governor Services team commissioned by the LA, or the Diocese. The school will consider any such request but ultimately, the final decision is made by the Chair of Governors.

9.9 The panel will normally be conducted through consideration of a written submission, but reasonable requests to make oral representations will be considered sympathetically. The final decision will be made by the Chair of Governors.

9.10 The panel should take place within 10 school days of receipt of the request and the panel decision will be issued within 5 school working days of the panel being heard.

10. Next Steps for complainants who remain dissatisfied with the way in which the investigation was conducted

10.1 When stage 2 has been completed this is the end of the school complaints procedure. If complainants are dissatisfied with the way in which the investigation was conducted they may ask for a further review of the process by the local authority.

10.2 If a complainant has completed the local procedures and remains dissatisfied, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State for Education. The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the governing board has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so.

10.3 Further information can be obtained from the DfE School Complaints Unit by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or going online at: www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

11. Social Media

11.1 Individuals who raise concerns are asked to comply with the Schools guidance on social media which should be available on the school website, a complaint can be undermined by:

- Comments made on social media
- Identifying individual staff on social media
- Personal abuse targeted towards individual members of staff
- Physical or verbal threats targeted to individuals or groups of staff

11.2 These behaviours amount to harassment and will be dealt with by the Police.

12. Serial and Persistent Complainants

12.1 The school is committed to working with anyone who raises an issue to take this seriously and work towards finding a solution to concerns. Generally, this should be a straightforward process and the school values the feedback that we receive on services. We accept that complainants may ask difficult questions where they believe that things have gone wrong and have a right to go through the complaints process.

12.2 However, in a minority of cases people pursue their feedback in a way which is inappropriate

12.3 Where the school is contacted repeatedly by individuals making the same point or asking for reconsideration on our position the school will need to take appropriate action. The school has a Serial and Persistent Complaints Policy for these difficult situations. This policy sets out what is considered to be unreasonable behaviour and the action that will be taken to address this. The procedure is available on the school website.

12.4 The application of a 'serial' or 'persistent' marking will be made against the subject of the complaint itself rather than the complainant.

Appendix a: Complaints Procedure During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

Statement of intent

In line with current government guidance, the school is not expected to handle new or existing complaints while it is open to a limited number of pupils due to the coronavirus pandemic; however, the school remains committed to maintaining open communication channels with parents and all stakeholders during this time.

We understand the necessity to adapt our procedures during the school's partial closure and to ensure members of our school community can continue to voice any concerns they may have.

This appendix outlines how the school will manage concerns and complaints during the coronavirus pandemic, in line with the government's guidance and this policy. The information in this section is under constant review and kept updated to reflect any changes to national or local guidance.

1. Making a complaint

- 1.1 For the purpose of this policy, a "**complaint**" can be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction' towards the actions taken or a perceived lack of action taken.
- 1.2 The normal complaints procedure set out within the main body of this policy will resume once the school reopens fully to all pupils and when directed by the DfE; until this point, formal complaints will not be dealt with by the school.
- 1.3 Any updates that influence this policy will be communicated to all parties involved via email a timely manner.
- 1.4 Complainants are encouraged to call the DfE for more information regarding the expectations on schools regarding complaints at this time.

2. Concerns with regards to school closures

- 2.1 A "**concern**" can be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt' where reassurance is required.
- 2.2 Parents can share concerns about aspects of the school's current provision, by contacting the headteacher via telephone or email. Concerns will be responded to as soon as it is deemed possible.
- 2.3 Parents who wish to share a concern about their child's learning should in the first instance will raise their concerns with their child's class teacher via telephone or email.
- 2.4 If a concern relates to the safeguarding of a child, the person concerned should contact the, LA or, where appropriate, the police without delay.

3. Recording a concern

- 3.1 A written record will be kept of any concern made and will include:
 - the main issues raised and any recommendations
 - whether the concern was resolved and how this was achieved
 - actions taken by the school as a result of the concern raised

- 3.2 The school will keep the governing board up-to-date with any concerns raised and actions that are taken to resolve them, where necessary.
- 3.3. Any record of concerns made will be held in line with the Records Management Policy.

4. Monitoring and review

- 4.1 The headteacher is responsible for continually monitoring government updates and updating this appendix in line with any changes and guidance on both national and local levels.
- 4.2 Any changes to this appendix will be communicated to all staff, parents and relevant stakeholders.
- 4.3 This appendix will be considered redundant once the school reopens fully to all pupils and when directed by the DfE – at which point, the school will resume its regular complaints procedures.

Appendix b: Complaints form

Please complete and return to school by email to contact.staff@st-michaels.sandwell.sch.uk or by post to St Michael's Church of England High School, Curral Road, Rowley Regis, B65 9AN. The school will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days. The acknowledgement will confirm the next steps to be taken and the timescale.

Your name:	
Pupil's name:	
Pupil's date of birth:	
Your relationship to the pupil:	
Address	
Postcode:	
Preferred contact number:	
Email address:	
What is your complaint concerning, and what action would you like the school to take?	
When did you discuss your concern/complaint with the appropriate member of staff?	
What was the result of the discussion?	
Signed:	
Date:	

Office use only:	
Date complaint received:	
Date acknowledgment sent:	
By whom:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date	