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*'Enjoy Achieving Together'*

# Compliments and Complaints Policy 2017

**Date: October 2017**

**Review Date: October 2020**

## **Making a Comment, Compliment or Complaint**

Our school is a place of learning, where everyone is valued and positively encouraged to achieve their full potential, in a safe and caring environment. As a church school everything that we do is underpinned by Christian values. Time is taken to value and nurture each child educationally, creatively and spiritually. Children and staff are encouraged to 'Enjoy achieving together' and believe in themselves in order to achieve their full potential.

We are committed to providing a high quality accessible service and operate a 'Comment, Compliment or Complaint' scheme which sets out our policy and procedures for dealing with all sorts of feedback from families, agencies, friends and neighbours within the community.

We aim to improve continuously the quality of our service for all of our community and welcome all comments which will assist us in doing this.

### **COMPLIMENTS**

Compliments are always gratefully received and can be passed on either directly to staff or formally recorded via our school questionnaires to parents and pupils which are conducted annually. In addition to this 'Parent View' can be accessed at any time to complete an Ofsted questionnaire about our school.

Compliments may also be presented in the form of a letter, email or card to the Head Teacher.

Comment slips are available in the school entrance hall for visitors and parents to make comments which can be posted in the Suggestions/Comments box.

All compliments are collated in a 'Compliments Book' which is displayed in the school entrance.

The Head Teacher holds a termly Open Forum Meeting for parents and carers, and this presents another opportunity for discussion – there is no set agenda.

### **COMPLAINTS**

Under Section 29 of the [Education Act 2002](#), Governing Bodies of all maintained schools in England have been required to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school. The law also requires the procedure to be publicised.

There is a difference between a concern and a complaint; taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the number that develop into formal complaints. The formal procedures will need to be invoked only when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

## **Scope**

The following procedure applies to complaints for which there is no other procedure available.

It excludes, therefore,

- complaints about the curriculum, religious education and collective worship, sex education and charging policy etc, for which there is a separate statutory complaints procedure originally established under Section 28 of the Education Reform Act 1988, and circulated to all schools in November 1989.
- Admissions
- Exclusions
- Special Educational Needs Assessment
- Staff Grievance and Capability and Disciplinary Procedures
- Child Protection Issues.

## **Aims**

We will endeavour to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and will always put the interests of our children above all else. We will give careful consideration to all complaints and we aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding.

Our complaints procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- be **simple** to understand and use;
- be **impartial and non-adversarial**;
- allow **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and **fair** investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect **confidentiality**;
- address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress;
- provide **information** to the school's senior management team and governors so that services can be improved.

## **Guidelines**

**For a general complaint:**

### **Step 1**

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education or support that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher; most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress.

### **Step 2**

Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the

head teacher. The head teacher will consider all matters of concern very seriously and investigate each case thoroughly. Most complaints would normally be resolved at this stage.

### **Step 3**

Only when an informal complaint fails to be resolved by the head teacher should a formal complaint be made to the governing board. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, who has been spoken to already and the preferred outcome. The parent should send this written complaint to the chair of governors via the school office.

## **For a complaint about the head teacher:**

### **Step 1**

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the behaviour, leadership or management of the head teacher, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the head teacher; most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way.

### **Step 2**

Where a parent feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the head teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the chair of the governing board. The chair will consider all matters of concern very seriously and investigate each case thoroughly. Most complaints would normally be resolved at this stage.

### **Step 3**

Only when an informal complaint fails to be resolved by the chair should a formal complaint be made to the governing board. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, who has been spoken to already and the preferred outcome. The parent should send this written complaint to the governing board via the clerk to the governors (the Bursar, via the school office).

## **Governing board complaints committee**

The governing board must consider all written complaints **within 21 school working days** of receipt.

The Chair of governors will nominate a governor to co-ordinate the procedure and will appoint a **complaints panel** consisting of 3 governors who are not employees of the school. The nominated co-ordinator will chair the complaints panel.

The complaints co-ordinator, the Bursar, will arrange a meeting of the complaints panel to discuss the complaint and will invite the person making it to attend the meeting so that they can explain the complaint in more detail. The school will give the complainant at least five days' notice of the meeting. If the complainant cannot attend the suggested date, a further date will be set. If the complainant does not attend the second date, a third and final date will be set, at which time the meeting will proceed without the complainant present.

The head teacher will write a report addressing the complaint and ensure that the complaints panel members and the complainant receive a copy 5 days before the meeting. (If it is a complaint about the head teacher, the Chair of Governors will write the report).

The complainant is invited to write a report addressing the issue and must ensure that the complaints panel members and the head teacher (or Chair of Governors) receives a copy 3 days before the meeting. Other written evidence will not be accepted at the meeting, except in exceptional circumstances.

### **Check list for a panel hearing**

The panel must take the following points into account:

- the hearing is as informal as possible;
- after introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint (with the support of parent partnership or other supporter if required);
- the panel members and head teacher (or Chair of Governors) may ask questions;
- the head teacher (or Chair of Governors) is then invited to explain the school's actions (with support of a member of the SLT, SENCO or other supporter if required);
- the panel members or complainant may ask questions;;
- the complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint;
- the head teacher (or Chair of Governors) is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint;
- the chair of the panel explains that both parties will hear from the panel within 3 working days;
- both parties leave the meeting while the panel decides on the issues.

**NOTE: NO** meetings will be recorded (tape/mobile phone etc) and this will be agreed at the beginning of meetings.

When the panel has fully investigated the complaint, the chair of the panel, on behalf of the governing body, will write to the complainant confirming the outcome of the complaint and any agreed action to be taken. The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

### **Use of Social Media**

The school will contact any parents/carers if a detrimental comment about a situation or a member of staff in school occurs on a social networking site to ascertain whether it is a concern which could be dealt with in school. School reserve the right to contact the owners of the social networking site and request the removal of this information. If this comment is racially motivated or can be classified as a 'hate' crime, Police will be contacted immediately.

## Investigating Complaints

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint should make sure that they:

- establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them;
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

## Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure we will look for a way in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

It should be noted that an admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

## Unresolved complaints

From 1 August 2012 complaints about maintained schools not resolved by the school that would have been considered by the Local Government Ombudsman or the LA should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Education.

Further information can be obtained by:

calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288

or going online at: [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)

or by writing to:

Department for Education

School Complaints Unit

2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

### **Governing Board Review**

The Governing Board will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary.

Complaints information shared with the whole Governing Board will not name individuals.

As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to school improvement. When individual complaints are heard, schools may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the Governing Board can be a useful tool in evaluating a school's performance.

### **Publicising the Procedure**

There is a legal requirement for the Complaints Procedures to be publicised.

The school's Complaints Policy and Procedure is publicised in the:

- school prospectus
- information given to new parents when their children join the school
- school website

## COMPLAINTS FORM

Please complete and return to Mrs M Shephard, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name:</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil:</b>
<b>Address:</b>
<b>Postcode:</b>
<b>Day time telephone number:</b>
<b>Evening telephone number:</b>

**Please give details of your complaint.**

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.**

**(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?**

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**

**Adopted October 2017**