



**ST. PETER CATHOLIC
ACADEMY TRUST**
BY SERVICE, TOWARDS GOD



ST ETHELBERT'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY

Complaints Policy

2018

Date of Review: October 2018
Date of Next Review:

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

The Academy Committee of St. Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School and Nursery are committed to ensuring that the highest standards are maintained at the school, both in the provision of education to pupils and in every other aspect of the running of the school. A complaints procedure is an important part of the management of a well-run school allowing parents and others the opportunity to voice any concerns they may have through appropriate channels.

This policy explains the procedure which has been adopted by the Academy Committee to ensure a timely, systematic and fair approach to the resolution of such concerns.

We recognise the need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage reduces the numbers that develop into formal complaints. We aim to ensure that concerns are handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. Our formal complaints procedure is only necessary if efforts to resolve the concern informally are unsuccessful.

Concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible and generally within three months after the event.

The policy does not include staff grievance or disciplinary procedures. An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this policy unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Whenever a formal complaint is received it will be investigated. At each stage, the person investigating the complaint makes 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 (if unsure or further information is necessary).
- 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.

Whenever a concern or complaint is raised we will remain mindful of ways 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.

When making the complaint, we encourage parents/carers to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

At all times we will seek to identify areas of agreement between the parties and clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred because this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Raising a concern or complaint

Stage 1: Informally

We aim to be an approachable and friendly school and we are always ready to listen to the views or concerns of parents. If you are at all worried about anything then please come and talk to us. Very often a conversation with your child's class teacher or an appropriate member of staff will reassure parents and/or to take timely and appropriate action. It may be that you feel that things are not going as well as they could be or you are worried about something your child is or isn't doing.

In the first instance please talk to your child's class teacher who will usually be able to help you with your concerns or reassure you. Teachers are usually available at the start or end of the day for quick questions or queries. If you wish to discuss things more confidentially please make an appointment via the school office.

If your concern is more serious, the class teacher **or** the parent can request that a member of the Senior Leadership team (usually the Assistant Headteacher for your child's phase or the Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion) become involved in order to respond appropriately to the concern you have raised.

Pupils may raise their concerns through the School Council or with any Teacher. General concerns or issues from parents can be raised through the Parent Council. Any person can bring their concern to the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher. A concern/ complaint about the Head Teacher must be directed to the Chair of the Academy Committee.

Every effort will be made to address and to resolve the concern or complaint as soon as possible by providing information and through discussion with you about the problem. ***This should take place within 5 working school days.*** If there is likely to be a delay, you will be informed of any delay and the reason why.

We take all concerns raised by parents seriously, but if you feel a concern has not been dealt with appropriately then parents should follow the procedure for making a formal complaint which is outlined in Stage 2 below

Stage 2: Formal complaints in writing to the Headteacher

If you are not satisfied with the response provided in Stage 1, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher. At this stage we would ask that you complete the "Formal Complaint Form" provided in the appendix. In this form you are asked to outline:

- What the concern/complaint is
- What steps have already been taken to resolve the issue
- What you would like to happen in order to resolve the issue

At this stage, the Headteacher may nominate a member of the Senior Leadership Team to investigate and respond to your concerns. This will usually be the Assistant Headteacher

responsible for your child's year group or the Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion. If this member of staff has already been involved in trying to resolve the complaint/concern during Stage 1, the matter will be referred to the Deputy Headteacher. In his/her absence the matter will be investigated by the Headteacher.

The Headteacher or nominated member of the Senior Leadership Team will invite you to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint and to seek a resolution. A friend may accompany you to help you in explaining the nature of your complaint.

The Headteacher, or the designated member of the senior leadership team, will investigate the circumstances of the complaint and may find it appropriate to ask for written statements from staff or pupils and to call for any relevant documentation.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, that member of staff has a right to be given details of the complaint and the opportunity to make representation about it. The person investigating the incident will take these details into account.

At any stage during this process and depending on the nature of the complaint, the nominated member of the Senior Leadership Team may request the involvement of the Head Teacher in order to secure a swift resolution.

Your complaint will be acknowledged, investigated and a written response provided within 10 working school days. You will also be invited to attend a meeting to discuss the outcome of your complaint. If it is not possible to respond within the time limit you will be informed of the delay and the reason why. You will be advised that if you are not satisfied with the response from Stage 2 then you have the right to make a complaint to the Academy Committee.

Stage 3: Formal Complaints to the Academy Committee

If the matter remains unresolved and you are not satisfied with the response provided in Stage 2, the complaint will be referred to the Chair of the Academy Committee. He or she will investigate, may speak to the parties involved and will prepare a written statement of findings to be submitted to the parent. The parent must be informed of the right to refer the matter to the Academy Committee complaints panel if he or she is not satisfied with the outcome.

If a hearing is requested, the clerk of the Academy Committee will write to the parent, the headteacher and the chair of Academy Committee giving details of the meeting, requesting copies of any documents to be put before the meeting and the names of any witnesses that either party may wish to attend. The parent will be informed of the right to be accompanied by a friend. The hearing should be on reasonable notice and be held as soon as practicable after receipt of the referral.

The procedure at the hearing (see appendix – checklist for a panel hearing) needs to be appropriate for the circumstances and is at the discretion of the chair of the Academy Committee's complaints panel but is likely to involve:

- Presentation of the complaint.
- A reply by the headteacher or an Academy Committee representative.
- Questioning by all parties.
- Representation about ways to resolve the complaint satisfactorily.

If necessary, the panel will withdraw to consider their findings of fact on the evidence put before them and their conclusions, which may include measures to redress problems identified. The panel's decision is final. If, despite following appropriate procedures, the

complainant remains dissatisfied, or tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of governors will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. The only redress the complainant may take at this stage is to refer the matter to the Education Secretary since the right to appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman was repealed in the Education Act 2012.

Complaints are considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. The school will, where possible, complete its investigation into the complaint, and provide a written report regarding the complaint. The report will be made available to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, and will be available for inspection by the headteacher, ***within 15 working school days***. However, the length of the investigation will depend on the nature of the complaint and other variable factors. If the investigation is likely to exceed 15 working school days, the school will set realistic time limits for each action within the stage. Where such further investigations are necessary, new time limits may need to be sent and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay

An Academy Committee Complaints Panel will be appointed to review the process followed by the school in handling the complaint and respond. You may be invited to attend the meeting of the Panel. You will be informed of the outcome of the meeting in writing, within 15 school working days. This brings to an end the Schools procedures for dealing with a complaint.

You can also take your complaint to Ofsted if the nature of the problem may impact the education or welfare of pupils in the whole school. This includes problems with the quality of education or poor management. Please follow the link <http://live.ofsted.gov.uk/onlinecomplaints>.

Whilst the details of concerns and complaints are confidential, the Academy Committee are advised to record the overall level, nature & outcome of any complaints. This can then be reviewed and any necessary steps taken to make improvements, for example to policies and procedures of the School.

All complaints and details regarding their resolution will be held on record in a secure manner and in confidence for six years. Records will then be destroyed.

This policy should be read in conjunction with all school policies.

APPENDIX A: COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

STAGE 2: FORMAL COMPLAINTS TO THE HEADTEACHER

Where a concern/complaint has not been resolved under Stage, please complete and return this form to the headteacher who will acknowledge receipt of this complaint and what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address/postcode:

Contact phone number:

Please give details of your complaint (please continue overleaf if necessary):

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.

Parent signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:
Date:

APPENDIX B: CHECKLIST FOR A PANEL HEARING

The Academy Committees' complaints panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.