



## **St. Stephen's Junior School**

### **Complaints Procedure**

**Amended October 2016  
Agreed by FGB December 2016**

**Next Review: December 2017**

#### **Introduction**

At St. Stephen's Junior School we will always work to avoid a concern becoming a complaint by dealing with it fully, promptly and courteously. If all efforts to resolve a concern are unsuccessful then we will follow the procedure below.

#### **Informal Complaints Procedure**

This document sets out the school's procedure for addressing complaints. It should be used only when informal attempts to resolve problems have been unsuccessful. If you have any concerns about the school or the education provided, please discuss the matter first with the most relevant person; for example, the class teacher or Deputy Headteacher at the earliest opportunity. The school considers any concerns very seriously and most problems can be resolved at this stage.

A statutory process and procedure exists for:-

- The curriculum and religious education
- Child Protection
- Admissions and exclusions
- Financial regulations
- Legal matters
- Personnel matters
- Awards
- Health and Safety
- Special Educational needs

#### **Aims and Objectives**

St. Stephen's Junior School will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and aim to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

Our procedure aims to:-

- Be easily accessible and publicised
- Be simple to use and understand
- Be impartial
- Be non-adversarial
- Allow swift handling with established time limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- Ensure a full investigation by an independent person where necessary
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible (some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation)
- Address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- Provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

## **Formal Complaints Procedure**

If you feel that a concern has not been addressed through informal discussion and you wish to have the matter formally investigated by an appropriate person from the school, please complete a complaint form (*Appendix 1*). If you would like help completing the form, the school will be happy to provide the assistance of someone unconnected with the complaint. The school will acknowledge in writing, receipt of the complaint form within three working days after receiving it. The school will enclose a copy of the school's complaints procedure with the acknowledgement. Initially your complaint will be dealt with by the Class Teacher or Deputy Headteacher. If you are not satisfied with the result from the Class Teacher/Deputy Headteacher then the procedure will be as follows:-

If the matter is about:-

- The day to day running of the school
- The interpretation of school policies
- The actions or inactions of staff at the school

This will be investigated by the Headteacher/Senior Teacher or a nominated member of the Governing Body. (See flow chart - *Appendix 2*)

If the matter is about:-

- School policies as determined by the Governing Body
- The actions or inactions of the Governing Body
- The Headteacher

This will be investigated by the Chair of Governors or a nominated governor. It may be necessary to appoint an independent investigator in certain circumstances. (*Appendix 3*)

## **Monitoring and Review**

The Governing Body monitors the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors may examine this log and consider changes to the procedure if necessary.

## **Availability**

A copy of this procedure is available to all parents on request and is published on the school's website.

## Appendix 1

Please complete and return to Mrs Jayne Dowkes who will acknowledge receipt and provide a copy of the school's complaints procedure.

# COMPLAINT FORM ST. STEPHEN'S JUNIOR SCHOOL

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to pupil:

Child's Class Teacher:

**Nature of complaint:**

(alternatively please attach your letter of complaint)

**What action, if any, have you already take to try and resolve your complaint? Who did you speak to and what was the response?**

**Outcome:**

(Please state what you would like to happen as a result of your complaint)

**Are you attaching any paperwork? Yes/No**

**Signed:**

**Date:**

***Official use only:***

*Date complaint received:*

*Date acknowledgement/copy of complaints procedure sent:*

*By whom:*

*Complaint referred to:*

*Date:*

*Complaint resolved?*

*Details:*

## Appendix 2 – Complaint/concern under Headteacher’s responsibility

### Concern – Informal

You should try and resolve the problem directly with the school.



**Resolved?**  
**No**



**Resolved – Yes**  
No further action



### Formal – Stage 1

You will be given a copy of the complaints procedure and a complaint form and offered support in completing the form. Once received, acknowledgement will be provided within three working days.



### Formal – Stage 1

Form received and acknowledged by the school.

Is the complaint about areas of the Headteacher’s responsibility?

**Yes**

**No**



### Headteacher’s responsibility –

Headteacher/designated Senior Teacher investigates and writes to you with the outcome of the process within 10 working days of receiving the complaint.



### Governor’s responsibility

Chair of Governors or designated governor investigates.



**Resolved? No.**

Complainant wishes to move to Stage 2 of the procedure and notifies the school in writing with 10 working days.

**Resolved? Yes**  
No further action

## Appendix 2 – Continued

### Formal Stage 2

Complaint form and all correspondence is passed to the Chair of Governors or nominated governor(s) to review whether the complaint has been properly dealt with.



**Resolved?**  
**No**

**Resolved?**  
**Yes – No further action**



No. Complainant is given a copy of “Procedure for Governing Body Complaints Panel Hearing”.(Appendix 4) A governor complaints panel is set up to consider the complaint within 10 working days of the complaint being passed to the governing body. The panel will consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school.



The panel meets to consider the complaint and make a final decision on behalf of the Governing Body. Panel writes to complainant with their conclusion within 5 working days of the meeting.



**Resolved?**  
**No**

**Resolved?**  
**Yes – no further action**



The complainant may decide to write to the Department for Education if they feel the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedure. See the DFE website for where to direct your complaint.

### Appendix 3 – Complaint/concern under Governing Body’s responsibility

#### Concern – Informal

Complaint at school level – complainant should try and resolve the problem with the school.



Resolved?  
No



Resolved – Yes  
No further action



#### Formal – Stage 1

You will be given a copy of the complaints procedure and a complaint form and offered support in completing the form. Once received, acknowledgement will be provided within three working days.



#### Formal – Stage 1

Form received and acknowledged by the school.  
Is the complaint about areas of the Headteacher’s responsibility or Governing Body’s responsibility?



#### Governing Body’s responsibility –

Chair of Governors deals with the matter or delegates a governor and writes to you with the outcome of the process within 10 working days of receiving the complaint.



Resolved?    **No.**

Complainant wishes to move to Stage 2 of the procedure and notifies the school in writing with 10 working days. Complainant is given a copy of the Procedure for Governing Body Complaints Panel Hearing (Appendix 4)

## Appendix 3 – Continued

### Formal Stage 2

Complaint form and all correspondence is passed to the Governing Body.



A governor complaints panel is set up to consider the complaint within 10 working days of the complaint being passed to the governing body. The panel will consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school.



The panel meets to consider the complaint and make a final decision on behalf of the Governing Body. Panel writes to complainant with their conclusion within 5 working days of the meeting.



**Resolved?**  
**No**



**Resolved?**  
**Yes – no further action**



The complainant may decide to write to the Department for Education if they feel the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedure. See the DFE website for where to direct your complaint.

## Appendix 4

### Procedure for a Governing Body Complaints Panel Hearing

The Governing Body Complaints Panel operates in accordance with the following formal procedures:

1. The Chair of the Governing Body Complaints Panel will aim to arrange for the panel meeting to take place **within 10 working days**.
2. The Chair of the Governing Body Complaints Panel will ask you whether you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your complaint. You can include witness statements, or ask witnesses to give evidence in person, if you wish.
3. The Headteacher will be asked to prepare a written report for the panel. Other members of staff directly involved in matters raised in your complaint will also be asked to prepare reports or statements.
4. The Chair of the Governing Body Complaints Panel will inform you, the Headteacher, any relevant witnesses and member of the panel by letter, at least five working days in advance of the date, time and place of the meeting. We hope that you will feel comfortable with the meeting taking place in the school, but we will do what we can to make alternative arrangements if you prefer.
5. With the letter, the Chair of the Panel will send you all relevant correspondence, reports and documentation about the complaint and ask whether you wish to submit further evidence to the panel.
6. The letter from the Chair of the Panel will also inform you that you are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. The choice of person to accompany you is your own, but it is usually best to involve someone in whom you have confidence but who is not directly connected with the school. They are there to give you support but also to witness the proceedings and to speak on your behalf if you wish.
7. With the agreement of the Chair, the Headteacher may invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting.
8. The Chair of the Panel will bear in mind that the formal nature of the meeting can be intimidating for you and will do his or her best to put you at your ease.
9. As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.
10. The chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. Please understand that any decision to share the minutes with you, the complainant, is a matter for the panel's discretion and you do not have an automatic right to see or receive a copy. Since such minutes usually name individuals, they are understandably of a sensitive and, therefore, confidential nature.

11. Normally the written outcome of the panel meeting, which will be sent to you, should give you all the information you require. If, however, you feel that you would like to have a copy of the minutes, it would be helpful if you could indicate this in advance. If the panel is happy for the minutes to be copied to you, the clerk can then be asked to maintain confidentiality in the minutes.
12. During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:-
  - You to explain your complaint;
  - You to hear the school's response from the Headteacher;
  - You to question the Headteacher about the complaint;
  - You to be questioned by the Headteacher about the complaint;
  - The panel members to be able to question you and the Headteacher;
  - Any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the chair's approval) and all parties to have the right to question all witness;
  - You and the Headteacher to make a final statement.
13. In closing the meeting, the chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to the Headteacher and yourself within five working days. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.
14. The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:
  - Reach a unanimous decision, or at least a majority decision on the complaint;
  - Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
  - Recommend, where appropriate, to the Governing Body changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not occur again.
15. The Chair of the Panel will send you and the Headteacher a written statement outlining the decision of the panel within five working days. You are entitled to have the handling of the complaint reviewed by the Department for Education. This process is not strictly an appeal, as the DFE cannot direct the Governing Body in most general complaints. It is, however, an opportunity to seek the view of an official third party and the outcome, including any recommendations, may be helpful to you in seeking resolution of the complaint, through the Secretary of State.
16. We will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the school's records but separate from pupils' personal records.