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• web: www.st-marys-truro.cornwall.sch.uk
Head Teacher: Mrs N Bray

Introduction

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether made orally or in writing. This policy addresses general complaints. Complaints about the curriculum, collective worship, racist incidents or provision for children with special educational needs are dealt with under separate procedures.

How does the Staged Approach Work?

The staged approach is designed to ensure that every effort is made to deal with complaints informally at school level in partnership with the complainant. The formal stages should only be triggered in exceptional circumstances:

Stage 1 is the informal stage. In the case of a complaint by a parent, the class teacher will receive the first approach and the majority of issues should be resolved at this stage. In the case of a complaint by a member of the public, the school office should be the first point of contact. A decision will then be made as to which member of staff is best placed to deal with the complaint.

Stages 2 and 3 are formal stages involving the Head Teacher and governing body.

Principles and Procedures

Our principle aim is to deal with complaints:

- Openly
- Fairly
- Promptly
- Without prejudice

Our procedures for dealing with complaints will:

- Be simple to understand and follow
- Be focused on outcomes
- Have established time limits for action
- Keep people informed at all stages
- Where necessary, respect people's desire for confidentiality
- Be carefully monitored and evaluated
- Provide information to the school's senior leadership team so that the school's procedures can be improved.

An Overview

Stage One - Discuss concerns informally with the relevant teacher.

Stage Two - Discuss concerns formally with the Deputy Head, Assistant Head or Head Teacher.

Stage Three - Make a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors to investigate the complaint.



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Guidance on Each Stage of the Procedure

There are three stages to this procedure:

Stage 1 is informal Stages 2 and 3 are formal. Any person expressing continued dissatisfaction should be advised of the next stage in the procedure.

Stage One: Discuss concerns informally with the relevant member of staff.

- Complainants are advised to speak to the member of staff concerned so everyone has a clear picture of the situation from all points of view. Most problems can be resolved at this informal stage.
- If the complainant indicates that he/she would have difficulty in discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff, the complaint may be referred to another member of staff. This member of staff may not necessarily be more senior.
- The member of staff who is dealing with the complaint should ensure that the complainant is reassured that the matter will be investigated and is clear what action has been agreed. All staff should be aware of the need for confidentiality.
- A brief record of any telephone calls, meetings and agreed actions should always be kept although it is not always necessary to provide the complainant with a written record at this stage. The Deputy Head should monitor these records.
- If either the complainant or staff member feels the matter needs to be taken further, the Head Teacher/Deputy may be contacted.

Stage Two: Discuss concerns formally with the Head Teacher or the Deputy Head.

- More serious concerns which remain unresolved at the end of Stage 1 should be referred to the Head or the Deputy Head (usually the Deputy in the first instance). They will then investigate the matter further. Any meetings that are held with the complainant in relation to the complaint should be arranged within 10 school days. However, more complex complaints may require an extension to this time limit.
- A log of all contacts relating to the complaint should be kept.
- The Head or Deputy Head should communicate the outcome to the complainant either verbally or in writing.
- If, as a result of the investigation, issues arise relating to staff discipline or capability, details should remain confidential to the Head teacher. However, the complainant should be informed that the school has taken appropriate follow-up action.



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Stage Three: Make a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors.

- Governors should only proceed with this formal stage of the Complaint Procedure if they have received a complaint in writing addressed to the Chair of Governors and all previous stages have been exhausted.
- Acknowledgement of the written complaint should normally be sent by the chair to the governors within 10 school days.
- It is essential that this process is fair and objective. To avoid a conflict of interest, it is vital that the full governing body does not hear the complaint at this stage. Any governor who has been involved with the complaint at an earlier stage would be unable to give objective consideration to the issue.
- It is for the governors to agree upon the procedures for the Complaint Panel meeting. However, the governors will usually convene a small panel of 3 governors who have not previously been involved in the complaint. The panel will usually meet within 15 school days of receiving the complaint.
- The Chair of the panel should notify the Head Teacher and the complainant as to whether they will be invited to attend the panel meeting. Alternatively, the panel may decide to consider written material only. Both parties must be treated equally. For example, if the Head Teacher is invited to the meeting, so must the complainant.
- If the complaint relates to a staff disciplinary or capability matter about which the Head Teacher has already taken action, the governors should focus on how the original complaint was managed to avoid prejudicing any ongoing disciplinary or capability procedures.
- The Head Teacher and complainant should be informed of the Panel's decision in writing within 10 school days.
- In the event that the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Complaint Panel, then they may request an appeal in writing which will then be coordinated by the appeals governor.
- This is the final stage in the school's Complaints Procedure. The governors' decision is final, however, where you have been through the school's internal complaints procedures (with or without appeal) and are still unhappy with the outcome or decision from the governors, you can contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency or the Department for Education, as outlined here:
<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/state-schools>



ST MARY'S C of E SCHOOL

Higher Trehaverne, Truro, Cornwall TR1 3RJ

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Since 2007 Ofsted also has powers to investigate certain complaints by parents about their child's school. Complainants should write to:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Signed

Dated (Chair of Governors)

Signed

Dated (Headteacher)