

# Complaints Procedure

## Introduction

This policy has been approved by our Trustees. It has been based on the advice provided by the EFA. (The Education Funding Agency)

The Governing Body is required to deal with all complaints relating to the school (stages 1-3 in the guidelines outlined below).

## Policy

St Margaret's Academy aim to deal with all worries and complaints in a positive and supportive manner. We welcome questions, comments and suggestions for improvement. In most cases the teacher should be the first point of contact and we aim to deal with all concerns quickly and effectively. If the complainant is not happy with the way the concern has been dealt with, the stages below offer clear guidance as to the action to be taken.

### Stage 1: Initial Contact with the school

Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you first make them known to the school. In most cases we would expect the class teacher to be the first point of contact, either by telephone, e mail, letter or in person. In some cases this initial contact may be followed by meeting with a more senior member of staff such as an Assistant Head or the Headteacher.

If a parent/carer wishes to meet with the class teacher we respectfully ask them to make an appointment to discuss the situation. This ensures that:

- We allocate sufficient time to listen carefully to your complaint

- Lessons can start on time and are uninterrupted

If possible we prefer all concerns/complaints to be dealt with as quickly as possible and to everyone's satisfaction. It is preferable for concerns to be handled without the need for formal procedures. We pride ourselves on honest and genuine relationships within our school communities; such values extend to all relationships with children, parents and members of our wider community.

However, we do appreciate that there may be times when more formal procedures are required and if you are still dissatisfied, your concern will become a formal complaint by following the procedures below.

## **Stage 2: Formal Consideration of your complaint**

You will be asked to confirm the complaint in writing to the Headteacher of St Margaret's Academy (or the Chairman of Trustees if the complaint is about the Headteacher). You must state clearly that you are requesting the complaint be dealt with under the formal procedure. Please include any previous correspondence. Your letter will be acknowledged in writing.

As part of the school's consideration of your complaint, you may be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint and to discuss any further details including any thoughts you may have about a suitable resolution. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you, to help you explain the reasons for your complaint. We would expect all parties present to maintain mutual respect and good manners throughout.

The Headteacher or Chair of Trustees will carry out a full investigation of all matters relating to your complaint. Where necessary this might include talking to witnesses and take statements from others involved.

Once the school has established all the relevant facts, you will receive a written response to your complaint. This will give a full explanation of the Headteacher's or Chair of Trustees' decision and the reason for it. If follow-up action is needed, the school will indicate what is proposed.

## **Stage 3: Complaints Review Panel**

If your concern has already been through Stage 1 and 2 and you are not happy with the outcome, the next step is to make a formal complaint to the Governing Body. You should contact the Chair of Trustees by letter, enclosing a copy of the written complaint originally submitted, indicating which matters remain unresolved.

No new complaint may be included. Letters should be sent to:

### **Chair of Trustees**

St Margaret's Academy  
Barewell Road  
Torquay  
Devon  
TQ1 4PA

The Chair of Trustees has a responsibility to convene an appropriate panel to review the complaint. In line with EFA recommendations, the review panel will include independent representation by, for example, a local Headteacher who is not involved in the running or the management of the school.

The aim of the complaints review panel is to ensure that a thorough and proper investigation was carried out. School representatives and the complainant will be invited to attend. If it was felt that a complaint had not been looked at properly, the panel would request that the complaint is re investigated and that the EFA procedures are followed.

The panel hearing will be organised to allow appropriate time for the complainant to be notified and to accommodate any reasonable requests relating to the time and date. Notification will be provided in written form and this may include e mail.

As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants.

The clerk will send a written statement to all attendees outlining the decision of the panel.

## **Stage 4: Complaints to the EFA**

The Governing Body's decision will usually be final; however, if you wish to pursue the matter further, you can take your complaint to the EFA using their online Complaint Form.

The EFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the academy. They will consider complaints about academies that fall into any of the following three areas:

1. where there is undue delay or the academy did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint
2. where the academy is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State
3. where an academy has failed to comply with any other legal obligation

They will not overturn an academy's decision about a complaint. However, if they find an academy did not deal with a complaint properly they will request the complaint is looked at again and procedures meet the requirements set out in the Regulations.

If the academy's complaints procedure does not meet the Regulations, they will ask the academy to put this right. They may seek to enforce the decision under the terms of the funding agreement on behalf of the Secretary of State, if appropriate.

This policy will be reviewed in full on a two yearly basis.