

Complaints Policy

March 2018

Name of Policy	Complaints Policy
Date ratified	March 2018
Committee Responsible for Policy	Children, Families and Community
Date to be updated	March 2021
Headteacher Signature	
Chair of Governors/Committee Signature	

Growing together as children of God

At Holy Trinity C of E Primary School:

- we want our pupils to **grow** in confidence, independence, resilience and knowledge, so that all achieve their full potential and develop a life-long love of learning and of the world around us.
- we work **together** with families, community and church to model positive relationships, supporting each other and acknowledging that we are stronger when we work together.
- we are growing together as **children of God**, strengthening our faith, secure in the knowledge we are unique, loved and cherished.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 We strive to provide a good education for all our children. The Headteacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents/carers. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or carers.
- 1.2 The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases, and has been developed in accordance with guidance from both the Department for Education (DfE) and the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education (SDBE). The document meets the requirements of section 29 of the Education Act 2002, which states that schools must have, and make available, a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school. In addition it addresses duties set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements.
- 1.3 If any parents/carers are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately. Most concerns can be resolved at this stage. A concern is defined as *an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought*.
- 1.4 If a concern is not resolved through informal communication with the class teacher, the complaint procedure should be followed, as described in this policy. A complaint is defined as *an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or lack of action*.
- 1.5 All parents/carers have the right, as a last resort, to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education, if they still feel that their complaint has not been properly addressed.
- 1.6 This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:
 - Admissions
 - Statutory assessments of special educational needs
 - Safeguarding matters
 - Exclusion
 - Whistleblowing
 - Staff grievances

Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

2 Aims

2.1 Our school aims to:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- be fair, respectful, open and honest when dealing with any complaint
- respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible
- resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding
- put the interests of the child above all else
- ensure all parties are kept informed of progress
- provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

3 The Complaints Process

- 3.1 If a parent/carer is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. In our experience 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.
- 3.2 Where parents/carers feel 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 Headteacher. This is **Stage 1** of the complaints procedure. Any complaints should be made within 3 months of the incident. The Headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously, and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved by this stage. The school aims to provide a response within 5 school days.
- 3.3 Should any parents have a complaint about the Headteacher, they should first make an informal approach to one of the members of the Governing Body, who will investigate it. The governor in question will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if parents are unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined below.
- 3.4 Only if an informal complaint fails to resolve the matter should a formal complaint be made. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, how the school has handled it so far, and within 3 months of the incident. This is **Stage 2** of the complaints procedure. The formal complaint should be made within 10 school days of receiving a response from the school at Stage 1 of the complaints procedure. The parent should send this written complaint to the Headteacher, or if the complaint relates to the Headteacher, to the Chair of Governors.
- 3.5 The Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) will aim to acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 school days and to respond to the complaint within 20 school days. If it is not possible to respond within this time, the parent/carer will be notified. Investigation of the complaint will include taking written statements from all

parties involved.

3.6 Most complaints will be resolved by this stage. However, if a complaint is still not resolved, parents/carers may take their complaint to the complaints panel of the Governing Body by writing to the Chair of Governors c/o the school. This is **Stage 3** of the complaints procedure. The complaint to the panel should be made within 10 school days of receiving a response from the school at Stage 2 of the complaints procedure.

3.7 Governors will aim to convene a complaints panel within 15 school days of receipt of the complaint. The complainant will be invited to attend the panel together with the Headteacher and any other parties involved. The school will aim to give the complainant 10 days' notice of the meeting. After hearing all the evidence, the governors will consider their decision and inform the parent about it in writing within 3 school days of the panel meeting.

3.8 If any parent is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then s/he is entitled to complain to the Secretary of State for Education on-line by following the instructions on the DfE web page here: <http://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>.

4 Monitoring and review

4.1 The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. The governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. Governors will monitor complaints to ensure that the procedure is effective in dealing with concerns. Some of the areas relating to complaints which schools may wish to monitor are:

- the number and nature of the complaints;
- whether the complaints were dealt with within agreed time limits;
- the stage at which complaints were ended satisfactorily.

4.2 Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents/carers, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

4.3 Governors may use the resolution of a complaint as an opportunity for school to improve practice.

4.4 This policy is reviewed every three years, or before if necessary.

5 Persistent complaints

5.1 Where a complainant tries to re-open an issue with the school after the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted and the school has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint, the chair of governors will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.

5.2 If the complainant subsequently contacts the school again about the same issue, the school can choose not to respond. The normal circumstances in which we will not respond is if:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs, and
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any), and

- The complainant is contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time

The school will be most likely to also choose not to respond if:

- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience, and/or
- The individual's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive, and/or
- The individual makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, school staff.

5.3 Unreasonable behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening may constitute an unreasonably persistent complaint.

5.4 Once the school has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, the complainant will be informed in writing, either by letter or email.

5.5 The school will ensure when making this decision that complainants making any new complaint are heard, and that the school acts reasonably.

Holy Trinity Church of England COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE Notes for Parents/Carers

As a Church of England School, Christian values are at the heart of all we do. We value our relationship with parents and all members of the school and local community. If you have a concern we want to know about it so that it can be dealt with immediately. Most concerns can be dealt with easily and quickly but to ensure all concerns are handled effectively the Governing Body has adopted a complaints policy and procedure.

The School's Complaints Procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means;
- be simple to use and understand;
- treat complaints confidentially;
- allow problems to be handled swiftly;
- inform future practice so that the problem is unlikely to recur;
- reaffirm the partnership between parents, staff and governors as they work together for the good of the pupils in the school;
- ensure that the school's attitude to a pupil would never be affected by a parental complaint;
- discourage anonymous complaints;
- actively encourage strong home-school links;
- ensure that all staff have opportunities to discuss and understand the school's response to concerns and complaints made by parents;
- ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint;
- regularly review its system for monitoring concerns and complaints received from parents.

Expressing a concern

If you have a concern:

We would like you to tell us about it so that we can talk with you and see how best to resolve your concern. The majority of concerns can be resolved informally by speaking to a member of staff. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in the school. Whatever your concern, please know that we shall treat it as strictly confidential.

Be assured that no matter what you wish to share with us, our support and respect for you and your child in the school will not be affected in any way; please do not delay telling us of your concern. It is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem which is more than a day or two old.

After hearing your concern we will act as quickly as we can; we will let you know the timescale within which you may expect a response. Please allow time for any action we may take to be effective.

Our procedure is in three stages outlined below:

HOLY TRINITY C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL

What to do first (Stage 1 – Informal)

Please contact your child's class teacher, or other appropriate member of staff, and arrange a time when you can discuss your concern. It may be possible for you to see the member of staff straight away but normally it is better to make an appointment so that you can sit and talk things through. It may be possible to give a response immediately, but where any investigation or information is required, a response will normally be given within five school days.

What to do next (Stage 2 – Formal)

If you are still unhappy, ask for an appointment with the Headteacher within 10 school days of receiving a response under Stage 1. Give a brief outline of your concern on the School's complaints form (see Annex A) when you make the appointment. After your discussion with the Headteacher you may have to wait a short time while investigations are carried out. Every effort will be made to resolve the situation as quickly as possible and the Headteacher will send you a written response within 5 school days of your meeting. If it is not possible to respond within this timescale, the Headteacher will tell you when you can expect a response.

If you are still unhappy (Stage 3 – Formal)

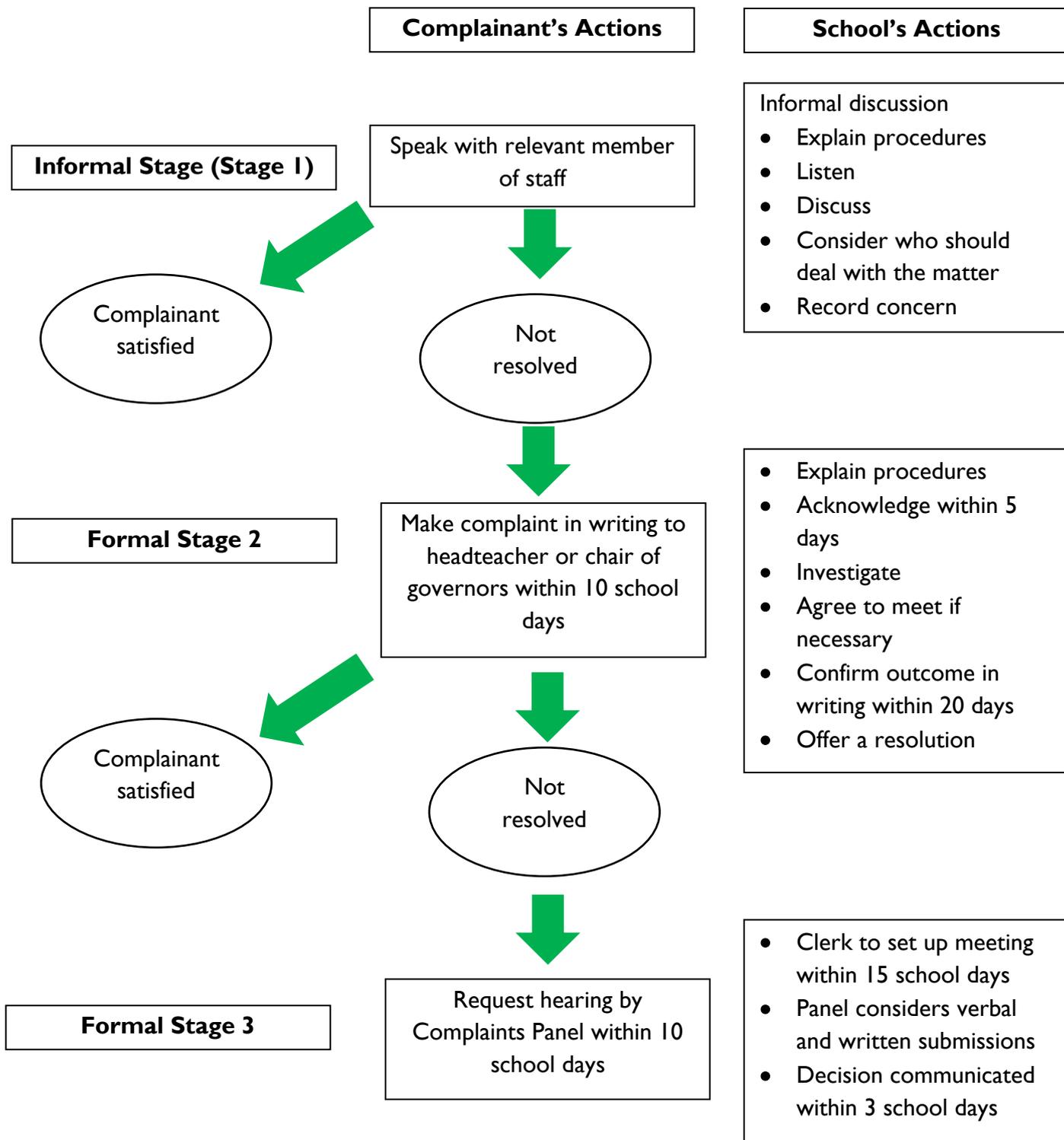
The problem will normally be resolved by this stage. However, if you still have concerns and they have not been resolved you may ask for your complaint to be considered by the complaints panel of the Governing Body by writing to the Chair of Governors c/o The School. The complaints panel will be formed of three governors who have had no prior involvement in the complaint, they will listen to you, to the Headteacher and, if appropriate, any others involved and come to a decision. You may bring a friend to the hearing if you wish.

The table below summarises the procedure:

Stage	Description	Timescale for receipt of complaint	Time-limit for School's response
Informal Stage 1	Informal discussions with relevant member of staff and/or Headteacher		As soon as possible but normally no later than 5 school days.
Formal Stage 2	Written complaint to Headteacher (or Chair of Governors if complaint is about the Headteacher)	Within 10 school days of receipt of response to Stage 1	Acknowledge within 5 school days. Response normally within 20 school days.
Formal Stage 3	Governors' Complaints' Panel Hearing	Within 10 school days of receipt of response to Stage 2	Hearing set up within 15 school days with 10 days' notice of meeting. Agenda and papers sent out 7 days in advance. Decision letter within 3 school days.

In all cases if any stage in the procedure is likely to take longer than publicised, parents will be informed of new timescales and the reasons for delay.

Summary Complaints Procedure



HOLY TRINITY C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Annex A – Complaints Form

COMPLAINTS FORM	
Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School	
When we receive a written complaint, we aim to acknowledge its receipt within 5 days and send a full or interim response within 20 school days.	
Name of complainant:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone (day):	Telephone (evening):
What is your concern and how has it affected you?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please list below:	
Have you discussed this matter with a member of staff before filling in this form? If so, who did you speak to and what was the response?	
What would you like to happen as a result of making this complaint?	
Signature:	Date:
Please return this form to Headteacher or Chair of Governors	