

## **St Matthew's Church of England Compliments and Complaints Procedure**

At St Matthew's Church of England Primary School, we welcome the views of our parents and members of the local community. This feedback is important to us. We would like you to tell us when you are pleased however we also need to know when you have any concerns so we can act on them in line with our policies and procedures, and make any changes or improvements which may be necessary.

### **Principles of the Procedure**

#### **Compliments**

It is important for parents/carers and other individuals to let us know when we have got it right so we can celebrate our successes. You may wish to compliment or praise the work of a teacher or another staff member working with your child. This can be done informally within any discussion you may be having directly with the person or a senior member of staff, or more formally in a letter or email. Any verbal or written compliments will be recorded by the member of staff receiving the compliment and be passed to the appropriate person. Feedback on compliments which are not given directly to the person concerned will be shared with them at the soonest and most appropriate time after receiving it.

#### **Complaints**

The implementation of the complaints procedure in the school is the responsibility of the Head Teacher, including making decisions about their own involvement at various stages.

#### **Informal Procedures**

Your child's class teacher is responsible for your child's education and general welfare. Should you have any concerns in this respect, they should be your first point of reference. If this does not resolve your concern, or if your concern is of a more serious or on-going nature, please do not hesitate to come into school to discuss it with the Headteacher, Fiona Deakin or in her absence, the Deputy Headteacher, Bhav Patel. An appointment is not usually necessary, although a phone call would ensure their availability.

#### **Informal Resolution**

- Many enquiries and concerns can be dealt with satisfactorily by the class teacher, the head teacher or other members of staff without the need to resort to a formal procedure. The school values informal meetings and discussions.
- All complaints should be acknowledged within five school working days. Every attempt should be made to respond to complainants within twenty school working days.
- The Head Teacher will formally investigate the complaint. They will talk to everyone involved and confirm the outcome of their enquiries with the complainant.
- If the complaint is about the Head Teacher or a Governor the Governing Body will investigate and confirm the outcome rather than the Head Teacher.
- If the complainant is not satisfied they may appeal to the Governing Body within ten school working days. When the Chair of Governors receives the complaint, they may wish to investigate and respond initially. If they feel that the nature of the complaint warrants it or if the complainant requests it following the Chair's response, the complaint should progress to stage two.

## **Formal Written Complaints**

- The complainant should set out the precise nature of the complaint in written form and return this to the Headteacher. The complainant should keep a copy of this and all other relevant correspondence.
- Should a complaint be about a general matter, the Headteacher may be able to respond immediately, e.g. if it only requires an explanation of school policy. For complaints that relate to specific actions or events, there is likely to be a need for further investigation in order to clarify the facts. The Headteacher or their nominee will determine how best to undertake this investigation.
- However, if in the early stages of the investigation, the Headteacher considers that the complaint is best dealt with at Stage 3, it will be passed to the Chair of Governors (or to the clerk to the governing body for the chair's attention) and the complainant informed of this action without delay.
- Should the Headteacher or a governor be the subject of a complaint, these will be dealt with under Stage 3 below. The complainant should send the form directly to the chair of governors (or to the clerk to the governing body for the chair's attention) c/o the school marking the envelope 'private and confidential'.
- Should the chair of governors be the subject of a complaint, the complainant should send the form directly to the vice-chair of governors (or to the clerk to the governing body for the vice-chair's attention) c/o the school marking the envelope 'private and confidential'.
- All formal complaints will be acknowledged by telephone call, email or letter within 5 school days of receipt.
- Investigations at this stage should normally be completed within 20 school days of receipt of the complaint, unless there are circumstances that require a longer investigatory period. The complainant will be informed in writing should more time be required.
- The school will aim to send a formal written response within 5 school days of the completion of the investigation. This gives a target of 5 school weeks for the completion of this stage of the procedure.

Following the stage 2 investigation, the Headteacher will decide on one of two outcomes:-

Recommend that appropriate remedial action necessary to resolve the complaint be undertaken, or

Confirm that all internal investigative measures have been exhausted and uphold the original informal response if this had occurred.

The decision is confidential to the complainant and to the governing body.

The complainant may take the complaint further if they are unhappy with the Stage 2 outcome by giving notice of their intention within 10 school days of their receipt of the formal outcome. This notice should be made in writing to the chair of governors (or to the clerk to the governing body for the chair's attention) c/o the school marking the envelope 'private and confidential'.

## **Referral to the Governing Body**

- Where the Headteacher is unable to resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant or where there is a complaint against the Headteacher or a governor, the complainant should write to the chair of governors (or to the clerk to the governing body

for the chair's attention) c/o the school marking the envelope 'private and confidential' including copies of all relevant documents.

- Should the chair of governors be the subject of a complaint, the complainant should send the form directly to the vice-chair of governors (or to the clerk to the governing body for the vice-chair's attention) c/o the school marking the envelope 'private and confidential'.
- A panel of three governors must be convened by the chair (or vice-chair) of governors to investigate the complaint.
- All formal complaints will be acknowledged within 5 school days of receipt.
- Investigations at this stage should normally be completed within 20 school days of receipt of the complaint, unless there are circumstances that require a longer investigatory period. The complainant will be informed in writing should more time be required.
- The school will aim to send a formal written response within 5 school days of the completion of the investigation.
- This gives a target of 5 school weeks for the completion of this stage of the procedure.
- Following the stage 3 investigation, the panel will decide on one of two outcomes:-

Recommend that appropriate remedial action necessary to resolve the complaint be undertaken, or

Confirm that all internal investigative measures have been exhausted and uphold the original response.

The decision is confidential to the complainant and to the governing body.

### **What can I do if I am not happy with the schools and governing body's responses?**

If your complaint is still unresolved after referring to stage 3 and you feel that the school has behaved unreasonably about your concerns, you can write to the Secretary of State for Education. Write to:

Ministerial and Public Communications Division, Department for Education,  
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Telephone 0370 000 2288

Contact form: <http://www.education.gov.uk/contact-dfe>

### **Annual report to Governors**

A summary of complaints will be presented to Governors annually. The Chair of Governors will be notified when a formal complaint has been received by the school. The Clerk to Governors will keep a list of formal complaints and copies of correspondence relating to the complaint.

### **Monitoring Compliments and Complaints**

Monitoring forms will be reported to the Senior Management Team and Governing Body termly.

### **Staff Support**

A complaint about a member of staff can be a major source of anxiety it is therefore important that members of staff involved in a complaint are kept informed about the progress (see page 8). Please note that if the complaint relates to a Child Protection issue different procedures apply. In these cases, no information should be given to the member of staff without the agreement of Social Services and the Police.

### **Other Procedures**

The Complaints procedures will not be used to investigate the following statutory procedures:

- Admissions to schools;
- Exclusions;
- Special Education Needs Provision (SEN Tribunal);
- Statutory Proposals for School Re-organisation;
- Serious complaints against staff;
- Child Protection Issues;
- Risk Assessment/Claim for Damages.

Complaints can be made about:

- Non-compliance with curriculum issues;
- Failure to provide a satisfactory service;
- Failure to follow policies and processes;
- The conduct of staff/Governors.

### **Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous complaints would not normally be considered under this procedure, the Headteacher or Governors will need to make a judgement and seek consultation if necessary.

### **Investigating Complaints**

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 about, 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.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **The Role of the Clerk**

The LA and DFE strongly recommend that any committee considering complaints be clerked. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

- Set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
- Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- Record the proceedings;
- Notify all parties of the panel's decision.

### **The Role of the Chair of the Committee**

The Chair of the Committee has a key role, ensuring that:

- The remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- The issues are addressed;
- Key findings of fact are made;
- Parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- The hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- The panel is open minded and acting independently;
- No member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.

### **Checklist for a Complaints Committee**

#### **Good Practice Guide**

The Committee 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 timescale