



## Complaints Policy

### 1. Introduction

St Alfege with St Peter's aims to be a caring, positive and supportive school where children can learn and receive high quality education in line with our Christian values. All our staff are committed to ensuring that the school community feels valued and respected as individuals. We have good transparent communication and a willingness to listen to our children and parents/carers including when they are raising an initial concern or formal complaint. This policy sets out the procedures for dealing with situations where there is an initial concern or a formal complaint from a complainant, about an aspect of a child's education and/or experience at school.

This policy will ensure that St Alfege with St Peter's manages initial concerns and formal complaints appropriately, in a timely and transparent way and in a manner that complainants will consider to be fair and objective.

### 2. Equal Opportunities

St Alfege with St Peter's values all our children, staff and parents/carers. We celebrate diversity and will not tolerate any forms of discrimination. We are committed to using our policies to ensure that our school has an ethos of openness, fairness and excellent communication.

All documentation will be made available in a format which allows for equal access by anyone wishing to make a complaint.

### 3. Resolving Initial Concerns

This policy makes a clear distinction between a 'concern' and a 'formal complaint'.

A concern may be defined as an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.

A formal complaint may be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.

### What we will do

- Encourage resolution of concern by informal means wherever possible.
- Ensure that every member of our school staff understands the importance of listening to the school community.
- Ensure that all school staff are aware of this policy and their role should a complainant approach them with an initial concern.
- Ensure that all initial concerns are taken seriously at the earliest stage and that all points of the initial concern are considered.
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.



- If the complainant remains unhappy with the outcome, the Headteacher will arrange to meet and discuss the concern. They will review the actions taken to date and the reasons why things are still not resolved.

#### 4. Resolving formal complaints

If all attempts to resolve the issue informally are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further the formal complaints procedure will be invoked.

##### What we will do

- Allow swift handling with established time limits for action and keeping all parties informed of the progress of the investigation.
- We will ensure that the complainant is advised of the process and is given this policy and the parental guidance leaflet.
- Ensure that the guidance leaflet is written in a way which is accessible and clear, that it is available on our school website and as a paper copy from the school office. Arrangements will be made to ensure that anyone making a complaint can access the information in a format which meets their needs.
- Ensure that the individual's confidentiality is respected.
- Ensure that the formal process is followed fairly and in line with this policy and that the chair/investigating officer will receive any paperwork and evidence which has been gathered during the informal stage and, that if necessary, they are given the opportunity to speak to any members of staff.
- Ensure that there is a room available in the school for the investigating officer to meet the complainant and any member of staff. All paperwork pertaining to the complaint will be available, signed and dated.
- Ensure that the complaints panel is convened and an appropriate room will be made available for the meeting and if necessary, a further room for any witnesses to wait.

Our staff will seek to learn from the process and ensure that any issues uncovered through the process can be used to improve our practices for delivery of high standards of education and care to all pupils at the school.

We will ensure that the complainants are confident that we will continue to work with them positively during and after the process, and that any pupils are not penalised in any way because of the complaint.

#### 5. What this policy does not cover

The complaints policy does not cover admissions, exclusions, curriculum concerns, religious education and collective worship or special educational needs and disability, staff discipline or grievance. These areas are covered by other processes.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, Local Authority (LA) safeguarding teams, Tribunal or OfSTED, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the



timescales set out within this policy, or result in the process being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against St Alfege with St Peter's in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint, until those legal proceedings have concluded.

## 6. Withdrawal of a formal complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

## 7. School Complaints Procedure

### Stage 1 Initial Concerns

Please contact your child's class teacher/phase leader/ Deputy or Headteacher 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 be given within five days.

### Stage 2 - Formal Complaints

If you are still unhappy, you can ask for an appointment with the Headteacher within five school days of receiving a response under Stage 1. It is helpful if you can give a brief outline of your concern on the School's Complaints Form 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 10 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.

The written response will include clarity of what the complaint is, confirmation that the school has had an opportunity to resolve the issue informally, and what they perceive to be any unresolved elements of the complaint.

The Headteacher is likely to delegate the investigation to another member of the school's leadership team or to a governor but will retain the responsibility to decide the outcome of the complaint.

The process will include interviewing any staff and or children who may have witnessed the concern or been involved previously; any staff who are named in the complaint and the complainant. They will keep a written record of the interviews.

The response will include details of the actions taken; who was interviewed and an explanation of why the decision has been made. It may include the proposed actions to be taken to prevent the



incident happening again. The letter will include how the complainant can escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the Stage 1 process.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher the chair or vice chair of the GB will carry out the investigation. If the complaint is against a member of the GB the school will use a member of a Governing Body (GB) which is collaborated with their school as an independent investigator. Complaints about the Headteacher/ or a governor should be made in writing to the clerk to the GB via the school. After the investigation has been completed the chair/vice chair will write the formal response to the complainant; if it is against a member of the GB the independent investigator will respond.

### **Stage 3 - Formal Complaints**

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 GB 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 members of the panel will be impartial; the panel could include governors from a collaborated school.

The request to move to Stage 3 should be in writing to the clerk of the GB (via the school office) within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. If the request for Stage 3 is outside of this timescale consideration will only be made in exceptional circumstances. The clerk will acknowledge receipt in writing within 3 school days.

The clerk will arrange the date and time of the meeting, this should be arranged within 10 school days of the Stage 3 letter – if this is not possible the clerk will provide a rationale for this and give an expected timeline.

The school will provide 3 possible dates for the meeting; if these are refused by the complainant without very good reason the clerk will arrange the meeting on one of the proposed dates. If the complainant is unable to attend, the meeting will be held in their absence using the written submissions from both parties.

The clerk will ensure that all attendees are informed of the date, time and venue of the meeting. They will request copies of any further written materials to be submitted to the committee at least 5 school days before the meeting. All written material will be sent to all attendees.

The committee will elect a chair of panel. They will decide whether they would wish to call witnesses to the hearing or whether to rely on written submissions.

The complainant may invite someone along with them to the hearing to provide support; this can be a relative or friend.



This is a closed meeting and not open to the public or the media. The electronic recording of the meetings or conversations will not be permitted unless the complainant's own disability or special need require it. Consent must be sought in advance and the consent will be recorded in the minutes by the clerk.

It will be the committee's decision as to whether they will accept papers at the meeting.

The committee will not accept as evidence recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the formal consent of all parties.

The committee will consider the complaint and all evidence; they will decide whether to uphold the complaint in whole or part or to dismiss the complaint in whole or part.

If the complaint is upheld the committee can consider how the school's policies and procedures can be improved to prevent any further complaints.

The chair will respond in full to the complainant and the school leadership team in writing within 10 days of the hearing.

***If the complaint is against a governor or the whole governing board, Stage 2 will be heard by members of the GB the school has collaborated with. The response from the hearing will detail any actions taken, how the investigation was carried out and a full explanation for the decisions made.***

The complainant will be informed in the final letter what the next stage is if they remain dissatisfied. The next stage is if they consider that the school failed to handle their complaint in accordance with the school complaints policy or acted unreasonably or unlawfully. They can contact the DfE (only after they have completed Stage 3).

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate but will consider whether the school has adhered to the education legislation and any statutory policies connected to the complaint.

**The complainant can contact the DfE on [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus); by telephone 0370 0002288 or in writing to: Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.**

## 8. Roles and Responsibilities

### The Governing Body will:-

- Ensure that the school has a policy and procedure in place to deal with all complaints relating to their school.
- Ensure that the policy is reviewed every two years.
- Receive a report from the Headteacher annually. This data will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy and, if required, review the policy/procedure in advance of the bi-annual review date.



- Ensure that all members of the school community are fully aware of the expectations of this policy, and ensure that if they are approached as an individual by a complainant regarding a concern, they will signpost the complainant to the relevant member of staff.
- Respect the complainant's desire for confidentiality and remain impartial.
- Monitor the nature and level of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis, to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure, making changes where necessary.

### **The Headteacher and other senior member of staff will:-**

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the policy and the procedures they will follow should a complainant approach them with an initial concern or complaint, and that it is properly recorded.
- Ensure that all complaints are dealt with fairly and objectively and within the agreed timescales set out in the complaints procedure.
- Report at least annually to GB with statistical data relating to all complaints received, so if required, services can be improved.

### **All our staff will**

- Ensure that they are confident in their understanding of what the expectations are if a complainant approaches them with an initial concern or complaint.
- Endeavour to resolve any issues at the first point of contact.
- Ensure that they inform the Headteacher/Principal (or other senior member of staff) that they have been approached with a complaint.

### **Complainant**

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible.
- Co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint.
- Ask for assistance as needed.
- Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect.
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

**Complaints Co-ordinator** (this could be the headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:



- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure.
- Liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure.
- Be aware of issues regarding:
  - sharing third party information;
  - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person.
- Keep records.

### Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- Providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
  - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved;
  - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint;
  - consideration of records and other relevant information;
  - analysing information.
- Liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in questioning.
- Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.
- Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal.
- Be mindful of the timescales to respond.
- Prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher, or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.



### **Clerk to the Governing Board**

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- Ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
- Set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- Collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale.
- Record the proceedings.
- Circulate the minutes of the meeting.
- Notify all parties of the committee's decision.

### **Committee Chair**

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- Both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting.
- The meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy.
- Complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a student/young person.
- The remit of the committee is explained to the complainant.
- Written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
- Both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself.
- The issues are addressed. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting.
- Key findings of fact are made.



- The committee is open-minded and acts independently.
- No member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.
- The meeting is minuted.
- They liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

### Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so.
- No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.

- It is recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- Many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting.

Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.

- Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a student/young person and present during all or part of the meeting.
  - Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
  - The committee should respect the views of the student/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.
  - If the student/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the student/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the student/young person needs to attend.
  - However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the student/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the student/young person's best interests.

- The welfare of the student/young person is paramount.



# ST ALFEGE WITH ST PETER'S

CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Creek Road, Greenwich, London, SE10 9RB



**Reviewed:** July 2019  
**Next Review Date:** July 2020  
**Custodian:** Full Governing Body

<b>Signed by the Chair of Governors:</b>	
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## Appendix 1

### Additional Guidance

- Exclusions information is available in the School Discipline and Exclusion Guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions>)
- Admissions – this will depend on the admissions authority – either the school, or Local Authority.
- Curriculum, to the DfE (<https://www.education.gov.uk/contactus>)
- Religious Education and Collective Worship – Local Authority, Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).
- Special educational needs and disabilities issues concern about statutory assessment should be directed to the Local Authority.
- Special educational needs and disabilities – concerns about provision – refer to school Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy
- Staff Grievance – dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
- Staff conduct – dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures.
- Withdrawal from the curriculum – parents/carers can withdraw their children from any aspect of RE including the DACW they do not have to explain why – if parents are dissatisfied they should use this complaints policy.
- Child Protection – dealt with under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with the relevant statutory guidance.



# ST ALFEGE WITH ST PETER'S

CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Creek Road, Greenwich, London, SE10 9RB



## Appendix 2

### Complaint Form- Formal Complaint Stage 2

Please complete and return to [Mrs Amanda Wilson \(Headteacher\)](#) or [Dr Irene Bishop \(Chair of Governors\)](#) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>
<b>Address: Postcode:</b>
<b>Day time telephone number:</b> <b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.</b>



# ST ALFEGE WITH ST PETER'S

CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Creek Road, Greenwich, London, SE10 9RB



**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**