

# **Altham St. James CE Primary School**

## **Complaints Procedure**

### **Introduction**

Your views are welcomed. In the spirit of true partnership between home, school and the community, you are encouraged to say what you think should go on within the school. Schools aim for high standards but sometimes things can go wrong or expectations are not met.

### **What is a complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet which may be about an event that has happened, failed to happen or the way in which something was handled.

The vast majority of concerns can be resolved informally. It is in everyone's best interests that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. This can usually be achieved through discussion and good communication. However, if you are not satisfied with the outcome, a formal procedure (as outlined in this policy) would then need to be followed when attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful.

### **What can you expect?**

- There are set response times for each stage of the complaints procedure.
- A complaint register should be maintained for formal complaints (see below).
- Conversations and correspondence should be handled with discretion, but you need to be aware that some information may have to be shared with others involved in the complaint procedure.
- Raising a concern or making a complaint should not affect the relationship between the school and you or your child.
- When investigating your complaint the school should talk to your child, witnesses and others involved quickly.

- The school and the governors have a duty to act properly and investigate complaints impartially. Once investigations are complete the person making the complaint should receive a written response from the school **within 20 school days**.

## Advice

- Many concerns can be resolved quickly with goodwill, often by making early contact with the class teacher.
- Remember the more information you have the better able you will be to discuss the matter. Fact find by asking the school for information. Obtain copies of relevant policies from the school e.g. behaviour policy (including anti-bullying and exclusion), home school agreement, SEND policy, health and safety policy etc.

## Complaint against a member of staff

- The complaint procedure is distinct from any formal disciplinary proceedings for staff. If a complaint did result in a disciplinary procedure, then the complaint would be put on hold and you should be advised of the delay and updated every three weeks.
- If a complaint is made against a member of staff or governor they will be informed and have the opportunity to respond.

**The governing body form a complaints panel as described below:  
3 members, neither of which are the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.**

## Complaint Procedure

### **Stage 1. Informal**

Your expression of concern should be made to the school at the earliest opportunity.

First talk to the teacher most closely concerned to clarify the facts and resolve

through discussion. A request for discussion with the headteacher or senior staff member may also be desirable before making a formal complaint.

## **Stage 2: Complaint**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 you may wish to make a formal complaint. This should be done in writing to the head teacher. Your complaint should be acknowledged within three school days.

The investigation should be carried out and the outcome communicated to you **within 20 school days**. The written response should include a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it (if additional time is required to formulate a response this should be explained to you). Where appropriate the response should include what action the school will take to resolve it.

The head teacher may delegate the task of collating the information to another member of staff but not the decision on the action to be taken.

Once a decision has been reached, the head teacher should ensure that you are clear about the action taken and what to do if you remain dissatisfied (see below).

When the head teacher receives your written complaint, they may decide to refer the matter immediately to a governing body complaint panel.

If the complaint is about the head teacher, the matter should be referred to the Chair of governors of the school.

If the complaint is about the chair of governors or any individual governor, the matter should be referred to the Clerk of the governing body.

## Stage 3: Governing body

Complaints rarely reach this formal level but should you need to, you should make a formal complaint to the chair of governors within 10 school days of the decision from the school. This needs to be sent in a sealed envelope via the school office; for the attention of the chair of governors.

Your letter to the chair needs to set out details of your complaint including why you remain dissatisfied and what outcomes you are seeking. The chair will then set up a panel of governors to consider the complaint.

A governing body complaints panel should normally consist of three people, none of whom should have been previously involved in your complaint. They should let you know when your complaint is to be considered. If a meeting with you and others involved is considered appropriate, you should be given seven days notice. The complaints panel should make their decision in private and write to you with their findings and any recommendations within seven school days.

#### **Stage 4: Final complaint stage**

If all attempts to resolve the complaint have been unsuccessful, for most schools you may refer your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education at the Department for Education (DfE), Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT. For more information, please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

The Secretary of State is unlikely to investigate individual issues but can inspect the school's policies and procedures and make sure these have been followed.