

Complaints Policy

At St. Michael's Federation we aim to provide a happy, caring, family environment and encourage children to develop into well behaved, confident, independent people. We are committed to encouraging the involvement of parents in the community of the school and in their children's education.

Aims of the Policy

- To provide clear and understandable procedures for dealing with complaints
- To resolve concerns through informal discussions at the earliest stage
- To facilitate good communications between parents and school
- To provide fair and transparent investigative process for the whole school community

The following stages are St. Michael's approach to complaints;

Preliminary Stage – An Informal Approach

- In the first instance, talk to the class teacher on an informal basis or other senior members of staff involved as soon as possible. If you or the member of staff feels that any discussion may take more time than is available or requires a more confidential setting an appointment can be made to meet at a mutually convenient time.
- If the concern is about the Headteacher, parents should have preliminary discussion with her. However, in exceptional circumstances, they may wish to approach the Chair of Governors – this can be done confidentially through the school office either by sealed envelope or through arranging for the Chair to contact you by telephone.
- Any concern will be taken seriously and will be dealt with sensitivity and as confidentially as possible. If the member of staff cannot deal with the matter immediately, she/he will make a note of the date and nature of the discussion and will explain what action will be taken and agree a time scale for a response. If no satisfactory solution has been found in 10 school days, parents will then be advised by the teacher of the next step in the process.

Stage 1 – The Headteacher

- When informal discussions have not reached a satisfactory conclusion, parents are advised to make an appointment with or write to the Headteacher, giving details of the complaint and enclosing any appropriate paperwork, stating whether the matter has been discussed with the class teacher and what the response was.
- The Headteacher will respond in writing within 5 school days acknowledging the complaint or offering a full response. A written record of meetings, phone calls etc. in relation to the complaint will be kept. It is hoped to respond to the complaint in full within 10 school days. If, however, the complaint requires an in-depth investigation the Headteacher will acknowledge this and let the parents know that a full response will take longer.
- If parents remain dissatisfied following the headteacher's final response, they will then be advised by the Headteacher of the next step in the process.

Complaints Policy

Stage 2 – Chair of Governors

- The Chair of Governors is in a position to be independent and impartial. Parents should send a letter to him only, outlining their complaint, explaining the reason for pursuing it beyond the headteacher's response and enclosing any relevant paperwork. They should not discuss the issue with any other governor as this may make it difficult to set up a pane of governors who have no prior involvement should the matter need to be taken a stage further.
- The chair of Governors will speak with the Headteacher and may meet with all parties to try to resolve the complaint.
- Where possible, the chair will acknowledge within five days. Record keeping and timescale for responding to parents will be as for the Headteacher. School/he will agree to hold discussions with the Headteacher. These discussions are key to resolving the complaint and agreeing a way forward.
- He will decide whether the issue relates to responsibilities that are delegated to the Headteacher by the governing body, fall within the governing body's remit only or are within the headteacher's terms and conditions of employment. This decision will determine what powers are available to the governors and therefore what action they can take. Advice will be sought from the LEA.
- In the rare circumstance that parents are unhappy with the outcome, the Chair of Governors will offer a right of appeal to the governing body's complaints panel.

Stage 3 – Governing Body's Complaints Panel

It is very rare for a complaint to reach this stage. If it does, the next step in the process will involve an independent and impartial review by a panel of three Governors.

Parents who wish to appeal to the governors should request this in writing to the clerk to the governing body. Parents should describe the issue in detail and say why they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the previous stages.

There are two forms of appeal

- **Reconsideration (considering afresh):** When the issue relates to delegated responsibilities, the panel can reconsider the matter, that is look at the matter afresh, with any new information that the Headteacher may not have been aware of at the time of the original response or action. In light of additional information, the panel may decide to write and ask the Headteacher to give the matter further consideration.
Complaints about a governor should also be subject to a reconsideration of issues.
- **Review:** If the matter falls within the headteacher's decision-making remit by virtue of his terms and conditions of employment, then the panel will only have the power to review the decision, not to consider the matter afresh. Any new evidence will be referred back to the Headteacher, who may consider amending the decision in light of that new information.

The clerk will arrange and facilitate the meeting.

Complaints Policy

The panel will consist of three governors with no prior involvement in the matter and the chair will be designated by the panel. The meeting will be held in an informal atmosphere with all parties present but will follow a formal agenda

The clerk will inform the parent in writing of the panel's decision at the earliest opportunity following the meeting. The letter will include

- A summary of the issues
- An outline of the main points of discussion
- The reasons for the decision
- Proposed actions or outcomes

It may also suggest that parents meet the Headteacher again to agree a way forward and that for issues relating to the national curriculum or the provision of religious education, parents may appeal further to the local authority.

For general complaints this is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure. If a parent believes that the headteacher's and governors' actions have been unreasonable or the correct process has not been adhered to, the only recourse is to the Secretary of State.