

St. Alphege CE Federation of Schools

School Complaints Policy



This policy should be used in conjunction with the DfE School Complaints Procedures 2019 and alongside the Federation of St. Alphege Schools' Home/School Agreement.

Introduction:

Since 1 September 2003 governing bodies (GBs) of all maintained schools and maintained nursery schools in England have been required, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, summarised in Annex A, to have in place a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. This does not limit complainants to parents or carers of pupils registered at a school. A complainant could be a member of the wider community or representing an ex-pupil. The law also requires the procedure to be publicised.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to St Alphege Schools about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a 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 complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

Most issues raised by parents, the community or pupils, are concerns rather than complaints. The Federation of St. Alphege Schools is committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure.

The prime aim of The Federation of St. Alphege Schools' policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner.

How to raise a concern

A concern can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, if they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The school requests that parents make their first contact the child's class teacher; if this is not possible or appropriate then the concern should be raised with the Headteacher. On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. Most concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way.

School Complaints Policy – SMBC & Federated Policy- 2019 Version 1

Governor Responsible: Pam Price

Adopted by Full Governing Body Spring 2019. Review date: Spring 2022.

Complaints

If, after raising your Concern, the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint. Please write to or call the school within 10 school working days. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 1 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mr Morrissey (the Executive Headteacher) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Executive Headteacher should be addressed to Mrs Pam Price (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to Mrs Alison Vining (the Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a **template complaint form** is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

The Federation of St. Alphege Schools' Policy has three main stages.

In summary they are as follows: -

- Stage 1 (formal): complaint heard by Headteacher;
- Stage 2 (formal): complaint heard by Chair of Governors
- Stage 3 (formal): complaint heard by GB's complaints appeal panel.

Stage 1 – complaint heard by Headteacher;

The Headteacher may delegate to another staff member the task of collating the information but not the decision on the action to be taken. The Headteacher will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it and a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. Following the investigation, the Headteacher will aim to provide a written response within 10 school working days of sending the acknowledgement. However, this can be extended to a maximum of 20 school working days if a complaint is more complex to review. The school will provide you details of the new deadline and an explanation on the delay. If you are not satisfied with the result at stage 2 please write to or call the school within 10 school working days of getting our response. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Stage 2 – complaint heard by Chair of Governors

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2 or the complaint is about the Headteacher, then you will need to write to the Chair of Governors c/o the school. The Chair of Governors will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it and a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. Following an investigation, the Chair of Governors will aim to provide a written response within 10 school working days of sending out the acknowledgement. However, if a complaint is more complex to review this can be extended to 20 school working days. The school will provide you details of the new deadline and an explanation on the delay. If you are dissatisfied with the result at stage 3, you will need to let the school know within 10 school working days of getting the response. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Stage 3 – complaint heard by Governing Body’s Complaints Appeal Panel.

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 2, then you will need to write to the Clerk of Governors giving details of the complaint and asking that it is put before the Appeal Panel. Should the Chair have been involved at any previous stage in the process a nominated Governor, impartial to the complaint, will convene a complaints panel. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it. The hearing will normally take place within 20 school working days of sending the acknowledgment.

The Appeal Panel will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Appeal Panel. The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant’s needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. The aim of the Appeal Panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. All parties will be notified of the Panel’s decision in writing within 5 school working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further.

The Governors’ appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by The Federation of St Alphege Schools. They will consider whether The Federation of St Alphege Schools has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the School Office, addressed to the Headteacher (Stage 1), the Chair of Governors (Stage 2) or the Clerk to the Governors (Stage 3) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

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

<p>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</p>
<p>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.</p>
<p>Signature:</p>
<p>Date:</p>
<p>Official use</p>
<p>Date acknowledgement sent:</p>
<p>By who:</p>
<p>Complaint referred to:</p>
<p>Date:</p>