

St. Alphege CE Federation of Schools School Complaints Policy



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

Introduction

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the [Education Act 2002](#), which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

It is also based on [guidance for schools on complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), including the model procedure, and model procedure for dealing with unreasonable complaints.

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.

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. Concerns may also be raised 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 Executive 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.

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 under our complaints procedure.

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 3 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Executive 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 in Appendix A. 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.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

School Complaints Policy – SMBC & Federated Policy- 2021 Version 1

Governor Responsible: Pam Price

Adopted by Full Governing Body Spring 2021. Review date: Spring 2024.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

Roles and responsibilities

Appendix 2 sets out the roles and responsibilities of the complainant and those involved in the complaints process.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, The Federation of St. Alphege Schools want to resolve the complaint.

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Stages of the procedure

The Federation of St. Alphege Schools' complaints policy has three main stages. In summary they are as follows:

- Stage 1 (formal): complaint heard by Executive Headteacher;
- Stage 2 (formal): complaint heard by Chair of Governors
- Stage 3 (formal): complaint heard by Governing Body's complaints committee.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Stage 1 – complaint heard by Executive Headteacher

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mr Morrissey (the Executive Headteacher) via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing, (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone. Please mark complaints in writing as "Private and Confidential".

The Executive Headteacher will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged in writing either by letter or email within 5 school working days of receiving it

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

Following the investigation, the Executive 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.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions [The Federation of St Alphege Schools](#) will take to resolve the complaint.

The Executive Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Executive Headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the Executive Headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and a Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body or The Diocese of Birmingham. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

If you are not satisfied with the result at stage 1 please write to or call the school within 10 school working days of getting our response. The school will then escalate your complaint to 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 Executive 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 2, you will need to let the school know within 10 school working days of getting the response. The school will then escalate your complaint to the next stage.

Stage 3 – complaint heard by Governing Body’s Complaints Committee

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 2, then you will need to write to the Clerk of the Governors giving details of the complaint and asking that it is put before the complaints committee. A Governor, impartial to the complaint, will convene a complaints committee. 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 complaints committee 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 complaints committee. If there are fewer than three governors from The Federation of St Alphege Schools available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through Solihull MBC’s Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 3.

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 committee decides to hold a meeting to deal with the complaint, the Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant’s absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

If a meeting is held the complainant may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant’s own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and a Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

The aim of the complaints committee hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.

All parties will be notified of the committee's decision in writing within 5 school working days after the date of the hearing. The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further.

The Governors' complaints committee 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.

Appendix 1 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.

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 whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix 2 - Roles and responsibilities

The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with the school throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Not publish details about the complaint on social media

The investigator

Anyone investigating the complaint, (which may be the Executive Headteacher at Stage 1, the Chair of Governors at Stage 2 or at any stage another individual appointed to look into the complaint and establish the facts) will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Where appropriate, prepare a comprehensive report to the Executive Headteacher, Chair of Governors or complaints committee which includes the facts and potential solutions

Clerk to the governing board

The clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings
- Arrange the complaints hearing
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

Complaints committee chair

The committee chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout
- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case