



**Complaints policy.**  
**An abridged guide for parents.**  
**St Catherine's C of E Primary School, in the**  
**Diocese of St Albans and affiliated to St**  
**Mary's Church, Ware**

**February 2025**

**Reviewed by leadership team and governors 19/5/25**

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St. Catherine's is a nurturing community where differences are celebrated, and caring, happy children flourish. Children embrace their learning and develop skills of wisdom and resilience, enabling them to live life in all its fullness.

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

## **HOW TO COMMENT OR COMPLAIN**

### **We care about what you think.**

Each day this school makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all the children. Your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful for future planning. You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of this school, though not actually make a complaint - you may just want to get something 'off your chest'. You may be dissatisfied about the way you believe your child has been treated. In any event, it always helps to come in and talk with the relevant staff in the first instance. Often a simple conversation can put everyone's mind at rest. Please feel free to contact us using the details listed above.

## **Our aims**

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly.
- If your complaint is urgent we will deal with it more quickly.
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage.
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake.
- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right.
- You will get a full and clear written reply to formal complaints within **28 school days (5½ weeks)**.

## **How to make a complaint:**

It is important for all parties that the procedure within this complaints policy is followed carefully.

### **In the first instance – informal stage**

- If you have a concern about anything we do, or if you wish to make a complaint, you can do this by telephone, in person or in writing (by letter or email). We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation. If there is something you are not happy about, or you don't understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss it with the class teacher or another appropriate member of staff, such as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo) if it is about Special Needs.
- We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge something, but if you don't tell us what is worrying you we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right. If the member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to attempt to resolve the matter, you should make an appointment with the Headteacher. You should be able to sort out your worries but sometimes this is not possible. In this case there is a next step.

### **First - formal stage**

- **Request a meeting with the Headteacher** who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome **within 10 school days (2 weeks)**.
- If your first contact is with individual Governors, they will advise you to take up your concerns with the appropriate member of staff or Headteacher. A Governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a Panel in the event of a formal hearing (Stage Two) and should be impartial.
- If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should **write to the Chair of Governors** and give this letter to the office who will forward it on. If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo) or your child's named Special Needs Officer at the Local Authority. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) may also be able to help you (addresses at the end of this document).

### **Second - formal stage**

- If you remain dissatisfied following Stage 1 and wish to take your complaint further, you will be asked to complete a form or write a letter addressed to the Chair of Governors. In the letter you should:
  - Make it clear why you are complaining.
  - Say who you have spoken to already.
  - Explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.
  - There are proformas to help you at the end of the full complaints policy, on our website.

### **What happens next?**

The Chair of Governors will then arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Governing Body.

This could involve a Panel of Governors at a hearing where the complainant and the respondent are invited to attend.

If the Chair of Governors or another Governor has been involved in discussions to help settle the matter at Stage 1, s/he should arrange for another Governor to take charge of the situation. In that situation, neither the Chair of Governors nor the Governor in charge should sit on the Panel themselves and they should instead ensure that a Panel is convened in line with the timeframes and guidance set out in the school's complaints procedure.

The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. It is not advisable for a Panel to investigate and conclude matters without giving the Complainant and Respondent the opportunity to respond, therefore a formal hearing with all in attendance is most preferable.

You should make sure that the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The Chair of the Panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The Chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting. If any member of staff is required by the Governing Body to attend a meeting they will also have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens, we will inform you in advance.

When the Panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel or the Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. Our Governing Body will aim to deal with your complaint **within 28 school days (5½ weeks)**.

### Further recourse

Most complaints are resolved by this process. Should your complaint not be resolved, your further options are as follows:

- You may complain to the Diocese, as St Catherine's is a Church school
- You can complain to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education

(Addresses below)

### For complaints about special educational needs provision:

You may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager.

It should be noted however that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within **20 working days (4 weeks)** of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint. After **20 working days (4 weeks)**, neither the school nor the Local Authority is under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint any further.

The Diocesan Director of Education, Diocesan Office, Holywell Lodge, 41 Holywell Hill, St Albans, AL1 1HE. Email: <a href="mailto:schools@stalbands.anglican.org">schools@stalbands.anglican.org</a> Website: <a href="http://www.stalbans.anglican.org">www.stalbans.anglican.org</a> . Telephone: 01727 818170.	The Secretary of State Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street London SW1P 3BT Website: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk">www.education.gov.uk</a> Telephone: 0370 000 2288
<b>Advisory Centre for Education</b> Education Advice & Training 72 Durnsford Road London N11 2EJ Web: <a href="http://www.ace-ed.org.uk">www.ace-ed.org.uk</a> Phone: <b>0300 0115 142</b>	<b>POhWER</b> Hertlands House Primett Road Stevenage SG1 3EE Web: <a href="http://www.pohwer.net">www.pohwer.net</a> Phone: <b>0300 456 2370</b>

<b>Children's Legal Centre</b> Riverside Office Centre, Century House North North Station Road, Colchester, Essex CO1 1RE Web: <a href="http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com">www.childrenslegalcentre.com</a> Phone: <b>0345 345 4345</b>	<b>National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)</b> Egerton House, Tower Road Birkenhead, Wirral CH41 1FN Web: <a href="http://www.nyas.net">www.nyas.net</a> Phone: <b>0345 345 4345</b>
<b>Special Educational Needs &amp; Disability  Information Advice Support Service  (SENDIASS)</b> Web: <a href="http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/sendias">www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/sendias</a> Email: <a href="mailto:SENDIASS@hertfordshire.gov.uk">SENDIASS@hertfordshire.gov.uk</a> Phone: <b>01992 555847</b>	