

**St. Michael's CE (VC) First School
Stone
Complaints/Compliments Procedures
Guidelines for Schools**

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the LA's leaflet for parents "Your School - Compliments, Comments and Concerns".

Introduction

The main purpose of a complaints procedure is to solve problems and to give parents a means to raise issues of concern and have them addressed. Complainants should be treated respectfully during and after the course of any complaints investigation.

All members of staff should be aware of the complaints procedure and understand:

- The importance of attempting to resolve problems before they become formal complaints.
- The importance of treating complaints respectfully.

Expressing Concerns

At this informal stage the school should consider the best way of dealing with the concerns raised according to the circumstances. It is preferable for all parties that issues are resolved now rather than later.

Formal Complaints

Stage 1 - The Headteacher

It may be that the headteacher has not been aware of the concern raised prior to this point. At this stage the Headteacher should consider whether the complainant can be satisfied without recourse to the governing body.

The response to the parent should be as described in the paragraph "outcomes" below.

Action through a complaints procedure may lead to action being initiated under other procedures. This may be disciplinary or Safeguarding procedures and consideration should be given to this possibility at the earliest stage. In these cases the investigations under the complaints procedure will be suspended until action under the other procedures (including appeals) has been concluded. The complainant should be advised if this is the case and also informed of the likely delay in the final resolution of their complaint.

Stage 2 - formal Complaint to the Governing Body

Where complaints cannot be resolved informally each school should have a procedure for accepting complaints made to the Chair of the Governing Body. Complaints should be accepted in writing or verbally. Where a complaint is accepted verbally it should be reported back to the complainant to ensure that details have been collected correctly. An example of a form that could be used for this purpose is shown in appendix 1.

The school should record when the complaint is received. A complaint should then be acknowledged in writing by, or on behalf of, the Chair of the Governing Body. The acknowledgement should include an explanation of what will happen next, time scales involved and the name of the person from whom they will next hear about the progress of the investigation.

Details of a complaint should be kept confidential except in so far as they need to be shared with people who might contribute to their resolution.

The Role of the Chair of Governors

The Chair of Governors will need to consider whether the investigation can be completed by the Headteacher (who will already have been involved), the Chair him/herself, or whether to refer the complaint to a Complaints Committee of the Governing Body. If the latter course of action is followed the chair shall present a full report to the Committee and, if necessary, external advice may be sought from the District Education Officer.

It would be appropriate for this committee to be made up of three Governors. The membership should not include the Headteacher and, according to the matter complained about, it may not be appropriate for certain categories of Governor to be included.

The Committee should meet at a time convenient to the members of the Committee, the Chair (who will present the report), the parent (in order that they may make representations in person) and any witnesses.

Outcomes

In all cases where a complaint has been investigated the complainant will be given a written response covering:

- the complaint;
- the scope of the investigation;
- the conclusion of the investigation;
- any action which has resulted.

The Committee may wish to offer the complainant the opportunity to discuss the response.

If the investigation upholds the complaint, redress should be appropriate to the complaint and may include:

- An appropriate expression of regret.
- Providing the solution desired by the complainant.
- Changing the procedures to avoid future problems.

Each school will take responsibility for:

- Deciding who can take remedial action.
- Ensuring that the remedy is carried out.
- Ensuring that any remedy is within the school's powers.
- Ensuring the approach to remedies is reasonable and consistent.

Where a complaint is not upheld the complainant must be given a response and informed of any further action that might be appropriate in their situation.

Stages 3 and 4 - The role of the LEA

Parents do not have a general right of appeal should they disagree with the *Governors'* decision. They may, however, raise the matter with the Local Education Authority or Secretary of State if they consider the complaint wasn't investigated properly and fairly. If the *Governors* have followed a proper procedure and considered the complaint reasonably, neither the Local Education Authority nor the Secretary of State can reverse their decision.

Appendix 1

St. Michael's CE (VC) First School

Complaints and Compliments

Please complete this form and return it to the school who will then forward it to the Chair of the Governing Body. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

1. Name _____

2. Address _____

3. Telephone Number Home _____ Work _____

4. Name of Child _____

5. Details of the Complaint/Compliment (please include the date or period of time to which your complaint relates and confirm whether you have already expressed your concerns informally, and to whom and when).

6. Do you have a suggestion for change?

Please attach copies of any more information you have to back up your complaint such as letters or report.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Compliments, Comments and Concerns

Compliments, Comments and Concerns

Your school would like to hear from you if you:

- are happy with the service it provides and would like to compliment the staff and its pupils;
- have any suggestions about how the school can improve the quality of its provision;
- have a complaint or concern. All complaints will be taken seriously and given full and proper consideration.

Expressing Approval

When things go well, it is very helpful if parents express their approval. Maintenance of high levels of staff commitment, morale and motivation are essential to the provision of the best education for your child. Positive feedback really helps.

To express your approval you can write, telephone, e-mail or speak personally to staff concerned or the headteacher. Your words will be appreciated.

Expressing Concerns

Your child's school is committed to providing a high quality service for your child. Sometimes things may seem to go wrong which may lead you to express concerns.

Any concerns should be raised with the member of staff concerned or the headteacher in the first instance. If the headteacher considers it appropriate another member of staff may be asked to respond because they have a particular responsibility or are familiar with the circumstances that have caused you concern. We hope that this would be sufficient to resolve the difficulty.

Making a Formal Complaint

If it has not been possible to resolve a difficulty **informally** then you can ask to use the formal complaints procedure.

- **Step 1 - the headteacher**

Having discussed your concerns you may feel it necessary to inform the headteacher that you wish to make a formal complaint. You can do this by telephoning, writing a letter or arranging an appointment to meet him/her. You will receive a written response.

- **Step 2 - the governing body**

If you are dissatisfied with the response you can make a formal complaint to the governing body. The school will provide you with a form that you can choose to fill in for this purpose.

The form will need to be sent to the Chair of Governors. Details of how the complaint will be investigated will be included with form.

You will receive a written response from the governing body.

When considering your complaint the chair of governors may seek advice from officers of the Local Education Authority. However, you should not contact the LEA or the Secretary of State direct until Step 2 is complete.

- **Step 3 and 4 - the role of the Local Education Authority/Secretary of State**
If you think that the governors have failed to consider your complaint properly and reasonably, you can raise the matter with the Local Education Authority or the Secretary of State. **However, it is important to understand that this is not a general right of appeal for any parent who disagrees with the governors' decision.** If the governors have followed a proper procedure and considered the complaint reasonably, neither the Local Education Authority nor the Secretary of State can reverse their decision.

If you wish to raise the matter with the Schools Complaints Unit please write to:

Schools Complaints Unit
Department for Education
2nd Floor Piccadilly Gate
Manchester
M1 2WD

In your letter please explain:

- a) what your complaint to the governors was;
- b) what response they have made to it;
- c) why you think that the governors have not followed a proper procedure in considering your complaint, and or;
- d) why you think that their consideration of it was unreasonable.

The District Education Officer may wish to meet with you but will, in any case, write to you to inform you of the further enquiries into your complaint.

If you remain dissatisfied with how the complaint has been dealt with you may wish to refer your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. Please write to:

The Secretary of State
Department for Education and Skills
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Note: This leaflet does not apply where the complaint may lead to disciplinary proceedings against a teacher or child protection procedures. These matters have separate procedures.