



### St Peter at Gowts Church of England Primary School

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Complaints about schools</b>
<b>Date adopted</b>	<b>November 2014</b>
<b>Date reviewed</b>	

#### **Introduction**

All schools in England are required to have a procedure in place for dealing with complaints relating to the school and any community facilities or services that the school provide. There are certain complaints which fall outside of this procedure because there are established statutory or other prescribed procedures available, for example staff grievances or disciplinary procedures.

In this school all staff are dedicated to giving all children the best possible education and caring properly for their health, safety and welfare at all times. We are committed to working closely with parents/carers and believe that school and parents/carers must work together in partnership, each carrying out our own particular responsibilities to help pupils gain the most from their time in school. We also desire to have good relations with our neighbours and the wider community.

If you feel that something is not going quite as you would like, that we are doing something that you are unhappy with, or not doing something that you feel we should, please tell us about it.

#### **Time Limits**

You should make the school aware of your complaint as soon as possible after the matter or incident has occurred that you wish to complain about. Usually, we would expect you to do this within three months of the incident occurring and if you do not contact the school within that time, we will not usually consider your complaint.

If your complaint relates to a continuing act, then occurrences outside of the three month time limit will usually be considered alongside the more recent occurrence.

If you feel there are exceptional circumstances that have prevented you from meeting the time limit, you can provide an explanation of these circumstances along with your complaint so that Governors can take them into account.

The final decision rests with Governors as to whether your complaint will be considered when it is raised outside of the three month time limit.

#### **Complaint Procedure**

##### **The first step:**

Please arrange to discuss any concerns with your child's class teacher, or with the particular teacher concerned. We hope that most problems can be sorted out this way. If you are not the parent/carer of a child at our school, please start at the second step and make contact with the Headteacher to discuss your concerns.

##### **The second step:**

If, after speaking to your child's teacher, and having allowed sufficient time to deal with the issue, you do not feel that your complaint has been properly dealt with, or if your concern is about the conduct of a particular teacher, then you should discuss the matter with that teacher's manager.

In our school this is the Headteacher. In almost all cases we can sort things out satisfactorily in this way.

**The third step:**

You should make a formal written complaint to the headteacher, unless the complaint is about the conduct of the headteacher. If your complaint is about the conduct of the Headteacher, you should make a formal written complaint to the Chair of Governors, addressing your envelope to the Clerk to Governors, care of the school's address.

You should receive an acknowledgement from the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors where the complaint is about the Headteacher) within five school working days. The acknowledgement letter should also indicate the date by which you can expect to receive the Headteacher's (or Chair of Governor's where the complaint is about the Headteacher) written response to your formal complaint letter. This will normally be within ten school working days from the date of the acknowledgement letter.

**Taking matters further:**

If you are dissatisfied with the headteacher's response to your formal complaint letter, or if your complaint is about the conduct of the Headteacher and you are dissatisfied with the Chair of Governors written response, then you will need to contact the Clerk to Governors who will convene the Governors' Complaints Committee.

For complaints against the Chair of Governors or any individual governor, you should also write to the Clerk to Governors, who will initiate the correct process. The Chair of Governors would normally consider complaints against an individual governor and the Vice Chair would normally consider complaints against the Chair of Governors.

You should send written details of your complaint, with any correspondence and evidence to support your complaint, to the Clerk to the Governors at the school address. If, for some reason, you do not feel able to do so, you should contact the Clerk, via the school, who will record your complaint as a statement for you to sign.

The Clerk to Governors will write to acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five school working days. The acknowledgement letter will explain the process which is to be followed and the expected timescale for that process. Where your complaint is considered under written representations, this process may take up to twenty-eight school working days to allow for the collection of representations and evidence.

The Governors' Complaints Committee (or the relevant governor in the case of a complaint against an individual governor) will consider your complaint and write to advise you of the outcome within the timescale provided by the Clerk to Governors.

If, at any stage of the process, we believe we are unable to meet the timescales which have been provided to you, we will contact you to inform you of the reasons for any delay and to provide you with a new timescale for the conclusion of that part of the process.

**Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour**

Staff and Governors are keen to ensure that all genuine complaints are dealt with fairly and promptly and in accordance with our agreed procedures. We would again emphasise that most matters can be resolved by discussing issues with our staff at the informal stages of our procedure.

Regrettably, there are times when complainants raise issues with or about staff in ways which are unacceptable. This can cloud the concern at the heart of the complaint, which may result in the delay or hindrance of a resolution. It can also have an adverse effect on pupils, staff and the effective running of the school. Examples of behaviours that we consider to be unacceptable are as follows:

- Using abusive or threatening language and/or behaviour.
- Making excessive demands on staff time and resources in pursuit of a complaint, whether in person, by phone, email or letter.
- Harassing individual staff members in a way which appears intended to cause personal distress rather than to find a resolution.

- Refusing to cooperate with the complaints procedure as set out in this policy.
- Persisting in repetitious complaints when these have been previously determined under the school complaints procedure.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the consideration proceeds and/or making unjustified complaints about those trying to deal with the complaint.
- Pursuing unreasonable outcomes which are disproportionate to the nature of the matters in hand.
- Electronically recording meetings, telephone calls and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved.

The school expects that any person wishing to raise a concern or complaint will:

- Follow the school complaints procedure.
- Treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect.
- Recognise the time constraints that staff operate under and allow them a reasonable amount of time in which to respond / address any issues.

Where a complainant raises a complaint in a manner which the school feels is unreasonable, actions may be taken to remedy this. The actions will be proportionate to the nature of the behaviour and may include:

- An informal approach to inform the person that the behaviour is unacceptable and needs to be modified.
- A formal written communication advising the person that the behaviour is unacceptable and appropriate action may be taken if the behaviour is not modified.
- Setting limitations on the method and frequency of contact with staff / school personnel.
- Refusing to register and process further complaints about the same or similar subject matter where the matter has already been determined, or where complaints are vexatious, or where complaints are personally harassing and deliberately targeted at one or more members of staff without good cause.
- Setting limitations on the person's access to the school site.

It should be noted that parents/carers and members of the wider community do not have an automatic right to enter school grounds and may be banned from entering the school site with immediate effect after an incident where behaviour has been verbally and/or physically aggressive.

Any restrictions placed on a person as a result of this policy will be time limited, with a specified date as to when the restrictions will be reviewed and potentially lifted.

**Again, we would emphasise that the Headteacher and Governing Body are committed to ensuring a full and fair consideration of all legitimate complaints and we recognise that the majority of parents/carers and members of the wider community will conduct themselves in accordance with this policy. However, we reserve the right to take any necessary actions under this policy in those rare cases where a person does not.**

#### **External Appeal:**

The decision of the Governors' Complaints Committee is normally final; however, if you are dissatisfied with their response, you may be able to take your complaint to an external body.

For certain complaints about schools maintained by the Local Authority, complainants can write to the Secretary of State for Education. You must do this in writing, either by post to:

School Complaints Unit  
 Department for Education  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Piccadilly Gate  
 Manchester  
 M1 2WD

Or, by using the online School Complaints form. This can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

You should be aware that the School Complaints Unit (SCU) will usually only consider a complaint once the school's internal processes have been exhausted. The SCU will examine whether the complaints policy and any other relevant policies were followed in accordance with the provisions set out. The SCU will also examine whether the school's policies adhere to education legislation. The SCU will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint.

**Please note that, unless your complaint is about the governors' response or lack of response, your complaint will generally have to be considered first by the governing body of the school.**

## **COMPLAINTS ABOUT SCHOOLS – COMPLAINT FORM**

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Please complete and return to the Headteacher or the Clerk to Governors depending on the stage of your complaint. You will receive an acknowledgement and an explanation of the process.

Your name:	
Pupil's name:	
Your relationship to the pupil:	
Your address:	
Postcode:	
Day time telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
Please give details of your complaint.	

What action, if any, have you taken to try and resolve your complaint?  
(Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Official use only

Date acknowledgement sent:	
By whom:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date of referral:	