COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

St George's CE Primary School

Date of issue	September 2026
Policy owner	Governing Body
Complaints records managed by	Head of School
Approved by	Full Governing Body
Date approved	
Next review	September 2028

1. Aims

St George's CE Primary School aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to concerns and complaints from parents, carers and others. We aim to resolve concerns as early as possible, fairly and without unnecessary formality.

When responding to complaints, we will:

- be impartial, non-adversarial and respectful;
- provide a full and fair investigation by a suitably skilled and impartial person or panel where necessary;
- address the points at issue and provide an effective and timely response;
- respect confidentiality while recognising that information may need to be shared in order to investigate fairly;
- make decisions that are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate;
- keep complainants appropriately informed;
- make reasonable adjustments so that disabled people and others with additional communication or access needs can use the procedure;
- consider whether learning from complaints should inform school improvement.

The school will normally seek to resolve concerns informally before the formal procedure is used. A complainant is nevertheless entitled to make a formal complaint where they wish to do so.

2. Legal framework and guidance

This procedure meets the requirement in section 29 of the Education Act 2002 for maintained schools to establish and publicise procedures for dealing with complaints about the school and community facilities or services it provides, where no separate statutory procedure applies.

The procedure has regard to the Department for Education's best-practice guidance for maintained schools and the current Maintained Schools Governance Guide. It also reflects the Equality Act 2010, UK data protection law and the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework where applicable.

The Governing Body is responsible for establishing the procedure. The school will publish it on its website.

3. Definitions and scope

3.1 Concern and complaint

A concern is an expression of worry or doubt about an issue for which reassurance is sought. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.

3.2 Matters outside this procedure

This procedure does not replace separate statutory or employment procedures. Matters that may need to be considered under another route include:

- school admissions and admission appeals;
- statutory assessment of special educational needs and Education, Health and Care Plan processes;
- matters likely to require a child protection investigation;
- suspensions and permanent exclusions;
- whistleblowing;
- staff grievances, disciplinary, capability or other employment matters;
- school reorganisation proposals;
- complaints about services supplied by another provider using school premises, which should normally be addressed to that provider.

Where a complaint contains both matters within this procedure and matters governed by another process, the school will explain how the different elements will be handled. A safeguarding concern will be referred immediately through the school's safeguarding procedures and will not be delayed by the complaints process.

4. Principles

- Complaints will be handled as confidentially as possible, consistent with a fair investigation and legal duties.
- People involved in investigating or reviewing a complaint must be suitably skilled and impartial and must not have a conflict of interest.
- The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints, but the Executive Headteacher or Chair of Governors may determine that an investigation is appropriate, particularly where safeguarding or serious wrongdoing is alleged.
- Complainants will not be treated adversely because they have made a complaint in good faith.
- The school will make reasonable adjustments to the procedure where required.
- Where timescales cannot be met, the school will explain the reason and provide a revised timescale.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Complainant

Complainants are expected to explain their concern clearly, provide relevant information, cooperate with reasonable requests and deadlines, and treat those involved with respect. Publishing personal or confidential information about a complaint on social media may make a fair investigation more difficult and may affect the rights of others.

Investigator

The investigator will establish the facts fairly, consider relevant records and evidence, speak to appropriate people and produce a clear written outcome or report. They will avoid reaching conclusions before the relevant evidence has been considered.

Complaints co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator may be the Head of School, Executive Headteacher, designated complaints governor or another appropriate person providing administrative support. They will coordinate communication, maintain records and support the fair operation of the procedure.

Governance professional / clerk

The governance professional or clerk will support the panel process, arrange meetings, circulate papers securely, advise on procedure and record the panel's decision.

Panel chair

The panel chair will ensure that the review is fair, orderly and respectful; that relevant information is considered; and that all parties have a reasonable opportunity to present their case.

6. Timescales

Complaints should normally be raised within three months of the incident or, where there is a series of related incidents, within three months of the most recent incident. The school may accept a complaint outside this period where there are good reasons and a fair investigation remains possible.

Complaints received during school holidays will normally be treated as received on the first school day after the holiday. 'School days' in this procedure means days when the school is open to pupils.

7. Early Years Foundation Stage complaints

Written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome within 28 days. Records will be retained and made available to Ofsted on request in accordance with the EYFS statutory framework.

Parents and carers may contact Ofsted if they believe EYFS requirements are not being met. Current Ofsted contact arrangements are available through GOV.UK.

8. Stage 1 – informal resolution

Most concerns should initially be raised with the member of staff best placed to resolve the issue, such as the class teacher. Where appropriate, a senior leader may become involved.

A concern may be raised in person, by telephone, letter or email. If the complainant is unsure who to contact, they should contact the school office on 0161 921 1660 or stgeorges.ceprimary@stgeorgescofe.co.uk.

The school will normally acknowledge an informal complaint within 3 school days and aim to provide a response within 10 school days. This may include a meeting with the Head of School where appropriate.

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, the complainant may make a formal complaint under Stage 2.

9. Stage 2 – formal complaint

A formal complaint should be made in writing by letter or email. A third party may submit it on the complainant's behalf with appropriate authority. Where a complainant has difficulty putting the complaint in writing, the school will provide reasonable assistance.

The complaint should explain what happened, relevant dates and people involved, any evidence the complainant wishes to be considered, steps already taken and what outcome they are seeking.

Formal complaints should be sent to the Head of School unless section 11 of this procedure applies. The school will acknowledge receipt within 3 school days.

The Head of School, or another suitably skilled and impartial person appointed to investigate, may meet the complainant to clarify the complaint and desired outcome. The complainant may be accompanied by a suitable companion. A request for a particular companion may be refused only where there is a reasonable basis, such as a conflict of interest.

The investigator will consider the relevant evidence and send a written response, normally within 10 school days. The response will address the complaint, explain the conclusions reached and any action to be taken, and tell the complainant how to request a Stage 3 review.

A request for Stage 3 should normally be made to the governance professional/clerk within 20 school days of the Stage 2 response. Late requests may be accepted where there are exceptional circumstances.

10. Stage 3 – Governing Body review panel

10.1 Constitution and independence

The Stage 3 panel will normally consist of three suitably skilled and impartial governors who have had no prior involvement in the complaint and no conflict of interest. The Executive Headteacher will not sit as a member of the review panel.

If three impartial governors cannot be identified, the Governing Body may source suitably skilled independent governors from another school, academy, the local authority or diocese, in accordance with DfE guidance.

10.2 Arranging the panel

The clerk will acknowledge the review request within 5 school days and will aim to arrange the panel within 20 school days, subject to availability. The complainant will be given reasonable notice.

Relevant written material will normally be circulated securely to all parties at least 5 school days before the meeting. Late evidence may be accepted at the panel chair's discretion where it can be considered fairly.

10.3 Attendance and conduct

The meeting will be held in private. The complainant may attend and be accompanied by a suitable companion. Legal representation is not normally necessary, but requests will be considered case by case. Media representatives may not attend.

Electronic recording is not normally permitted. A reasonable adjustment may be made where a disability or other significant need requires recording; arrangements should be agreed in advance wherever possible.

The panel will give the complainant and the school a fair opportunity to explain their position, answer questions and refer to relevant evidence. Witnesses may be invited where their evidence is necessary and proportionate.

10.4 Outcome

The panel may uphold the complaint in whole or in part, or not uphold it. Where appropriate, it may recommend action to resolve the complaint or improvements to school systems and practice.

The clerk will normally issue the panel's written findings and recommendations within 10 school days of the hearing. The decision letter will confirm that the school's complaints procedure is complete and explain the complainant's right to refer concerns about the school's handling of the complaint to the Department for Education.

11. Complaints about the Executive Headteacher, Head of School or governors

Complaints about the Executive Headteacher, Head of School, Chair or Vice-Chair of Governors, an individual governor, or the Governing Body must be routed so that the person complained about does not investigate or determine the complaint.

- A complaint about the Head of School should be sent to the Executive Headteacher, who will arrange an appropriate impartial investigation unless they are also implicated.
- A complaint about the Executive Headteacher should be sent to the Chair of Governors, via the governance professional/clerk.
- A complaint about the Chair of Governors should be sent to the Vice-Chair, via the governance professional/clerk.
- A complaint about the Vice-Chair or another individual governor should be sent to the Chair, via the governance professional/clerk.
- A complaint jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair, about a majority of governors, or about the entire Governing Body will be referred to the governance professional/clerk so that an independent investigator and, where necessary, an independent review panel can be arranged.

The same principles and broadly equivalent stages/timescales will be followed, adapted as necessary to preserve impartiality.

12. Referring a complaint after the school procedure

Once the school's procedure is complete, a complainant who believes the school did not handle the complaint in accordance with its published procedure, or acted unlawfully or unreasonably in exercising duties under education law, may refer the matter to the Department for Education.

The Department for Education does not normally reinvestigate the substance of the complaint or substitute its own decision for the school's. Its role includes considering whether the school followed its procedure and complied with relevant education law.

Current information and the online service are available through GOV.UK under 'Complain about a school to the Department for Education'. The school will include appropriate referral information in its final response.

13. Persistent, serial and unreasonable complaint behaviour

St George's is committed to dealing with complaints fairly and impartially. A person will not be labelled unreasonable merely because they are persistent or because they disagree strongly with the school.

However, behaviour may become unreasonable where the frequency, nature or manner of contact hinders the school's consideration of the complaint, significantly disrupts school operations or unreasonably affects staff or other people.

Examples may include:

- repeatedly raising substantially the same complaint after the procedure has been completed without significant new evidence;
- refusing to identify the substance of a complaint or desired outcome despite reasonable assistance;
- refusing to cooperate with the procedure while insisting the complaint be resolved;
- insisting on a process or outcome that is incompatible with the published procedure or outside the school's powers;
- excessive, repetitive or unnecessarily prolonged contact that places a disproportionate demand on school resources;
- abusive, threatening, discriminatory, harassing or intimidating communication;
- knowingly providing false or falsified information;
- publishing confidential or personal information in a way that interferes with a fair process or the rights of others.

Before restricting contact, the school will normally explain the concern and give the complainant an opportunity to modify their behaviour. Where necessary, the Executive Headteacher, Head of School or Chair of Governors may introduce a proportionate communication plan, such as a single point of contact, specified communication method or reasonable limits on frequency. Restrictions will be kept under review.

The school may stop responding to repeated correspondence about a completed complaint where it has taken reasonable steps to address the matter, clearly stated its position and options, and further contact adds no material new information. New complaints will still be considered on their merits.

Serious threats, harassment, aggression or violence may be reported to the police and managed under the school's safety procedures.

14. Barring from school premises

The school is entitled to take reasonable steps to keep pupils, staff and visitors safe. Where a person's behaviour gives serious cause for concern, they may be asked to leave the premises and, where justified, their implied permission to enter the site may be withdrawn.

Any decision to bar a person will be proportionate, confirmed in writing and provide an opportunity for the person to make representations. The decision will be reviewed after considering those representations and at appropriate intervals. The school will seek legal or local authority advice where appropriate.

A decision about site access is separate from the person's right to use the complaints procedure; arrangements will be made so that a barred person can continue to communicate appropriately with the school.

15. Duplicate complaints and complaint campaigns

Where a substantially identical complaint has already completed the procedure, the school will consider whether the new complainant has raised any material new issue or evidence. If not, the school may explain that the matter has already been considered and signpost the appropriate external route.

Where the school receives a large volume of substantially identical complaints, particularly from people unconnected with the school, it may publish a single response or use a standard response while ensuring that genuinely different issues are considered appropriately.

16. Record keeping and data protection

The school will keep a record of complaints, actions taken, the stage at which the matter was resolved and the final outcome. Relevant correspondence and notes of meetings or telephone calls will be retained securely.

Complaint information will be shared only where necessary for investigation, governance, safeguarding, legal or regulatory purposes and will be managed in accordance with UK data protection law, the school's privacy notices and retention schedule.

Governors who may later be required to sit on a review panel should not receive unnecessary detail about a live complaint. This helps preserve independence and fairness.

17. Learning lessons and monitoring

The Chair of Governors will review underlying themes arising from complaints with the Executive Headteacher and/or Head of School as appropriate, while respecting confidentiality, to identify any improvements to policy, systems or practice.

The Chair of Governors will monitor the effectiveness of the procedure. Complaint records are logged and managed by the Head of School. The Governing Body will receive appropriate anonymised assurance information without compromising the independence of any future panel.

18. Review and publication

This procedure will be reviewed every two years, or sooner where legislation or Department for Education guidance changes. It will be approved by the full Governing Body and published on the school website.

19. Related policies and procedures

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Admissions arrangements and appeals procedures;
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion procedures;
- SEND Policy and SEN Information Report;
- Staff grievance and disciplinary procedures;

- Whistleblowing Policy;
- Positive Relationships / Behaviour Policy;
- Equality and Disability Equality arrangements;
- Privacy notices and data protection arrangements.