St. John's CE (A) Primary School

Wheatly Avenue, Trent Vale, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 6SB

School Concerns and Complaints Procedure

Spring 2026

Approved and Authorised by:

Signed	SM Bowyer	**Headteacher/Co-ordinator**
Signed	L Jones	**Chairs of Governors**
Date	**11/03/2026**	

'*I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness*.' John 10:10

Dedication - Courage – Joy

1. Introduction

The main purpose of this concerns and complaints procedure is to solve problems and to give parents/carers a means to raise issues of concern and have them addressed.
Concerns and complaints should be treated respectfully during and after the cause of any complaint's investigation. All members of staff should be aware of the procedure and recognise the importance of attempting to solve issues before they become a formal complaint.

AIMS: The aims of this policy and procedure are:

- To continue with our commitment to listen to concerns, criticism and challenges from all members of our community, and to provide a means to respond positively, in order to bring about improvement.
- To encourage the resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible and to be guided by an independent person where necessary.
- To be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint.
- To ensure that all members of the school community are entitled to have their points of view heard.
- To deal with informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage to reduce the number which could develop into formal complaints and to ensure that we avoid unhealthy conflict as a result of unresolved concerns and complaints.
- To ensure parents/carers have a clear understanding of the way in which the school will receive and deal with their concerns and complaints. To address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary.
- To ensure that staff and governors respond positively and promptly to complaints from parents/carers.

2. Definition

- A complaint can be defined as a clear statement of dissatisfaction about any aspect of the school's work. A complaint can be bought by a parent/carer of a registered pupil at the school or a person who has been provided by a service/facility at the school. This person is referred to as the complainant.
- A concern becomes a complaint only when the complainant asserts that the school has acted wrongly in some significant decision, actions, or by their failure to take action.
- Even when a complaint has been made it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.
- Complaints can only refer to the current academic year or the previous term unless the complaint refers to a child protection issue.

3. Guidelines

How a complaint can be made.

- Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, email or in writing. A person with a complaint should normally seek to contact the members of staff responsible for the relevant issue. However, all staff will endeavor to try to help, even when the issue is not that individual's area of responsibility.

Care will be taken to:

- Clarify the nature of the complaint.
- Clarify the outcomes sought.
- Check whether the person making a complaint requires support of any kind, for example if they are disabled and need mobility assistance, help with speech, hearing or sight.
- Explain the complaints procedure.
- The school does not wish to receive anonymous complaints and will not undertake to act on any information received in this way unless a child is deemed at risk of harm.
- Inform the members of staff if a complaint is made about them.

Circumstances under which this procedure will not be used: If your concerns relate to the following areas, you should contact the school office, where you will be advised on the appropriate procedure.

- School Curriculum
- Collective Worship
- Religious Education
- Admission
- Exclusion
- Child Protection

Special Circumstances

If the complaint suggests that a child has been at risk of significant harm through physical, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect, it may be referred without further notice to Social Services.
Complaints regarding the headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors –
Laraine Jones Laraine.Jones@stjohnscea.org.uk
Complaints against the Chair of Governors, an individual governor or the governing board should be addressed to the clerk to the governing board at Stoke Council - Alison Cooke.

Informal Stage

Stage 1 – Expressing concerns to the class teacher

- The vast majority of concerns can be dealt with quickly and effectively by the class teacher, before they become a major issue. If a parent/carer has a concern, it is best if it is dealt with at this informal stage, where the concern is expressed to the member of staff involved.
  So that the concern can be given the time it deserves and be dealt with sensitively, it is best if an appointment is made, so you can see the teacher in a confidential environment at a convenient time. It is not appropriate for concerns to be expressed on the school playground after school or before school starts or with other parents/carers.
  At this informal stage the school should consider the best ways of dealing with the concern/complaint according to the circumstances. It is preferable for staff, parents/carers and children that any concerns are resolved at the earliest opportunity.
- This preliminary discussion may be undertaken to help clarify if they are making a complaint, expressing an opinion or has misunderstood the situation and whether they wish to take the complaint further.
- The complainant should be allowed to bring a partner/friend to any discussion but it should only relate to the complainant's child and not be made on behalf of another child.
- The member of staff dealing with the concern should make sure that the complainant is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed.
- The process should be completed speedily and concluded in writing with appropriate detail.

- Where no satisfactory solution has been found within 10 school days the complainant should be informed that they will need to consider whether to make a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher.
- If the complaint involved a child with special educational needs, the SENCo will help support the parent/carer and school at this stage.

Expressing concerns/complaints to the Headteacher

- It may be that the Headteacher has not been aware of the concern raised prior to this point.
- If the parent/carer feels that the concern has not been dealt with by the class teacher, an appointment can be made to see the Headteacher to discuss and try to resolve the issue. If following this initial meeting with the Headteacher a parent/carer would like to progress this discussion to a formal complaint, a detailed description of the complaint should be made in writing to the Headteacher (See Appendix 1).
- If a first approach is made to a Governor, the next step would be to refer the complaint to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure.
- Governors should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at early stages, as they may be required to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

Formal Stage

Stage 2 – Referral to the Headteacher

- The complainant is invited to put their complaint in writing (See Appendix 1) with the offer of assistance by the school staff if necessary. If the complaint has communication preferences due to disability or learning issues, the school will allow alternatives forms of contact, in person or by telephone (notes should be made).
- The Headteacher acknowledges the letter within 5 school days and provides an opportunity to meet with the complainant to discuss the complaint.
- The Headteacher investigates the complaint and a written response should be made within a further 10 school days of the receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible a letter should be sent explaining the reason for the delay and provide a revised target date. The written response should include what action (if any) the school proposes to take to resolve the complaint, or, if the decision goes against the complaint, a full explanation as to why.
- If the complainant still remains dissatisfied he/she is advised that in order to progress the complaint, they must notify the Chair of the Governing Board, in writing within 10 days of the written response from the school.
- In the case of a complaint about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors should hear this stage.

N.B At any point between the beginning of Stage 1 and Stage 2 the Headteacher may choose to intervene or respond to a request for a meeting in order to resolve the complaint quickly. If the complaint is not resolved the complainant is given the opportunity to take it further i.e. Stage 3.

Formal Stage

Stage 3 –Review by the Governing Board

It is important that this review is not only independent and impartial, but that it is seen to be so. Therefore **the full** Governing Board should not consider complaints as a serious conflict of interest can arise.

- A written acknowledgement of the complaint is sent by the Chair of Governors within 5 school days.
- The letter informs the complainant that the Governor's Complaints Panel will hear their complaint within **20 school days** of receiving the complaint. It will also inform the complainant of their right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint.
- The Chair/Vice Chair should invite the Headteacher to prepare a written report for the panel in response to the complaint.
- The Chair of the Governing Board convenes a Governors' Complaints Panel (which will normally consist of three members) appointed by the Governing Board.
- All relevant correspondence, including additional material from the complainant and a written report from the Headteacher, should be given to each panel member as soon as possible and, in any event, at least **5 school days** prior to the meeting.
- The Chair/Vice Chair of Governors will inform the complainant, Headteacher and members of the panel at least **5 school days** in advance of the date, time and venue of the meeting.
- The notification letter to the complainant should inform them of their right to be accompanied by a friend/advocate/interpreter.
- Subject to prior approval of the Chair, either party may call named witnesses to the meeting.
- Either party must inform the Chair (via the school) at least **48 hours** in advance of the meeting if they intend to exercise this right.
- Either party, subject to the approval of the Chair, may call witnesses to the meeting. The involvement of staff other than the Headteacher is also subject to the discretion of the chair.
- The meeting will be held and a written decision will be sent to both the complainant and the Headteacher within **7 schools days** of the meeting.
- The written explanation sent to the complainant at Stage 3 will include an explanation that the decision of the Governors' Complaints panel is final.
- It should be noted that, if the complainants remain dissatisfied their complaint can be taken to the Secretary of State for Education on the grounds that the Governing Board is acting or proposing to act unreasonably or has failed to discharge its duties. The Secretary of State may contact the Governing Board for more information in order to consider the complaint.

Presence of pupils at meetings:

- It is unlikely that the resolution of a complaint would be assisted by the presence of pupils at any meeting between the Headteacher, other staff and the complainant.
- In the exceptional circumstances of it being necessary for a pupil to attend a meeting related to a parental complaint, to clarify facts, there would need to be an undertaking from all parties that confidential matters relating to named members of staff would not be discussed. The Headteacher would consult with parents/carers before any meeting where their child is being asked to clarify facts concerning a parental complaint, and would ensure that pupils do not participate in any discussions where they might witness confrontation between adults.
- Children will be asked to leave the meeting if it is felt by either side that the child is becoming distressed.

Points to note**:**

a) Complainants should be fully informed about the next stage of the procedure if they are likely to be dissatisfied by the outcome of previous stages.
b) At any stage of the procedure it may become apparent that the complaint falls outside this general complaints procedure. Complainants need to be informed if this happens, especially if this general complaints procedure is abandoned or postponed until the appropriate procedure is completed e.g. child protection.
c) School days are when pupils are attending; staff INSET days are excluded.
d) Counting begins on the day after the receipt of the complaint.
e) If a complainant raises again an issue that has already been taken through the complaints procedure, governors will inform the complainant that the matter is now closed. If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, governors can choose not to respond (DfE recommendation).

What this policy does not cover

Some complaints will not be covered under this policy and are covered by separate procedures.

For example:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of SEN
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Any safeguarding concerns would be undertaken through the school's Safeguarding and Children Protection Policy or Child on Child Abuse Policy.

Deadline for raising complaints

The deadline for raising a complaint with the headteacher or governors is 3 months after the concern took place (Recommended DfE timeline). Though the headteacher and governors are will consider each individual case and an exception made be made where appropriate.

4. Vexatious complaints

If properly followed a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, or adds other issues, the Chair of the Governing Board is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

5. Monitoring complaints

All complaints will be monitored by the handling and outcomes at the formal stage, by:

a) The number of complaints and their categories.
b) Whether complaints are dealt with within agreed timescales.
c) The stages at which complaints were concluded.
d) The effectiveness of the school's overall policy.
e) The various types of redress and their frequency.
f) The impact upon the home-school links.

Governors will monitor complaints. The headteacher will raise complaints in their report to governors or as any other business. If the complaint is about the headteacher this may be raised by the chair to governors and if it in relation to the chair this may be raised but the clerk to governors.

6. Publicity and communication

a) There is a legal requirement for the school to publicise its complaints policy and procedures. Reference to this policy will be included in:
b) The school prospectus.
c) All staff members and Governing Board members will be made aware of the complaints procedure and the various stages involved.

7. Confidentiality

All conversations and correspondence will be treated with discretion. Personal information will only be shared between staff on a 'need to know' basis. There is an expectation that all members of staff dealing with a person making a complaint will act in a courteous and respectful manner. All complaints will be taken as a matter of serious concern. The school also expects that people making the complaint will also conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner.

8. Equality

Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that any individual has the opportunity to raise concerns or submit a formal complaint. This includes the right to be accompanied or represented by a friend or relative, or to submit formal complaints that have been written by another individual on their behalf. It is an expectation that equal respect will be granted to each person involved with the process and that differences between people will be respected and understood.

9. Review of this policy and procedure

The school's policy and procedures relating to complaints will be reviewed at least every three years by the Governing Board and parents/carers will be notified of any amendments made. The Governors monitor the complaints procedures in order to ensure all complaints are handled properly. Many complaints/issues can be easily resolved by the class teacher or other members of staff. The Headteacher logs all complaints received and records how they are resolved.

Revision History - DFE statutory policy and recommend annually review

Version	Date	Comments	Review Date
14	Spring 2026	No change	Spring 2027
13	Spring 2025	No changes	Spring 2026
12	Autumn 2023	No changes	Autumn 2024

Appendix 1

Complaints Form

If you have tried unsuccessfully to resolve your complaint and wish to take the matter further, please complete this form and send it to the Headteacher. (If your complaint is against the Headteacher you will need to send the form to the Chair of the Governing Board).

Name:	Address:
Tel. No/Mobile:	
Email:	
Name of child:	Postcode:
Date of Birth of child:	Relationship to the pupil:

What is your complaint about and what would you like the Headteacher to do?
When did your discuss your concern/complaint with the appropriate member of staff?
What was the result of the discussion?

Signed: Date: