

**ST JAMES' CE AIDED INFANT SCHOOL  
COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2012**

**INTRODUCTION**

St James' CE Aided Infant School places great importance on the close partnership between parents, staff and other stakeholders. It is hoped that parental concerns can be dealt with on a normal day to day basis. It is, however, important that parents are aware of the school procedure for dealing with complaints.

**STAGE 1: INFORMAL STAGE**

On occasions, a parent may raise a concern directly with school staff without any formality. At this stage, it may be unclear whether the parent is making a complaint, seeking information or has misunderstood a situation. In any event, the school aims to resolve the concern at this point in a speedy and effective way.

However, if the concern is not resolved immediately and a complaint is confirmed by the parent, the opportunity will be given to discuss the matter with the Headteacher.

The Headteacher will discuss the issue with the parent and those involved in school, with the aim of resolving the complaint as soon as possible. The parent will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and what action, if any, the school proposes to take.

If the informal process has been exhausted and no satisfactory solution has been found, the parent will be asked by the member of staff dealing with the complaint whether (s)he wishes the complaint to be considered formally at stage two of this procedure.

If wishing to proceed with the complaint, the parent will be invited to put the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors using the form attached at Appendix 1. The form should be sent to the Chair of Governors within **three school days**.

**STAGE 2: REFERRAL TO CHAIR OF GOVERNORS**

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge the written complaint within **five school days** of receipt and provide an opportunity to meet the parent to discuss the complaint.

The Chair of Governors will investigate the complaint and a written response will normally be made within **ten school days** of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date.

The written response will include full reasons for the conclusions reached by the Chair of Governors and what action, if any, the school proposes to take to resolve the matter.

If the parent still remains dissatisfied, (s)he will be advised that, in order to progress the complaint further at Stage 3, (s)he must notify the Clerk to the Governing Body in writing **within ten school days**, copying the original complaint form.

The Clerk will then ensure that the parent is offered the opportunity of taking the complaint to the Governors' Complaints Panel at Stage 3 of this Procedure.

St James' CE Aided Infant School

The Chair of Governors may delegate to another Governor his/her responsibilities in this procedure if he/she has any personal involvement in or knowledge of the subject of the complaint, or if circumstances him/her from acting.

### **STAGE 3: REVIEW BY THE GOVERNORS COMPLAINTS PANEL**

The Clerk will send a letter to inform the parent that the complaint will be heard by the Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP) within **ten school days** of receiving the complaint. The parent will also receive a copy of the "Procedure for Governing Body Complaints Panel Hearing".

A written decision will be sent to both the parent and the Chair of Governors and/or Headteacher by the Chair of the GCP within **five school days** of the hearing.

If the parent is still dissatisfied with the outcome they will be informed of their right to refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH.



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

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By whom:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**

## **Model Procedure for conducting a Governing Body Complaints Panel Hearing**

The Governing Body Complaints Panel operates according to the following formal procedures:

1. The Chair of the Governing Body Complaints Panel will aim to arrange for the panel meeting to take place within **10 working days**.
2. The Chair of the Governing Body Complaints Panel will ask you whether you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your complaint. You can include witness statements, or ask witnesses to give evidence in person, if you wish.
3. The Headteacher will be asked to prepare a written report for the panel. Other members of staff directly involved in matters raised in your complaint will also be asked to prepare reports or statements.
4. The Chair of the Governing Body Complaints Panel will inform you, the Headteacher, any relevant witnesses and members of the panel by letter, at least **five working days** in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. We hope that you will feel comfortable with the meeting taking place in the school; but we will do what we can to make alternative arrangements if you prefer.
5. With the letter, the Chair of the Panel will send you all relevant correspondence, reports and documentation about the complaint and ask whether you wish to submit further written evidence to the panel.
6. The letter from the Chair of the Panel will also inform you that you are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. The choice of person to accompany you is your own, but it is usually best to involve someone in whom you have confidence but who is not directly connected with the school. They are there to give you support but also to witness the proceedings and to speak on your behalf if you wish.
7. With the agreement of the chair of the panel, the Headteacher may invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting.
8. Witnesses will be invited to the hearing and give statements but withdraw once they have done so.
9. The chair of the panel will bear in mind that the formal nature of the meeting can be intimidating for you and will do his or her best to put you at your ease.
10. As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.
11. The chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. Please understand that any decision to share the minutes with you, the complainant, is a matter for the panel's discretion and you do not have an automatic right to see or receive a copy. Since such minutes usually name individuals, they are understandably of a sensitive and, therefore, confidential nature.

## St James' CE Aided Infant School

12. Normally, the written outcome of the panel meeting, which will be sent to you, should give you all the information you require. If, however, you feel that you would like to have a copy of the minutes it would be helpful if you could indicate this in advance. If the panel is happy for the minutes to be copied to you, the clerk can then be asked maintain confidentiality in the minutes.
13. During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:
  - you to explain your complaint;
  - you to hear the school's response from the Headteacher;
  - you to question the Headteacher about the complaint;
  - you to be questioned by the Headteacher about the complaint;
  - the panel members to be able to question you and the Headteacher;
  - any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the chair's approval) and all parties to have the right to question all witnesses;
  - you and the headteacher to make a final statement.
14. In closing the meeting, the chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to the headteacher and yourself **within five working days**. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.
15. The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:
  - reach a majority, decision on the complaint;
  - decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
  - recommend, where appropriate, to the Governing Body changes to the school's systems, policies or procedures to address the issues raised.
16. The Chair of the Panel will send you and the headteacher a written statement outlining the decision of the panel **within five working days**. If you are not satisfied with the outcome you may appeal to Local Government Ombudsman, details of which should be provided in the letter.
17. We will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the school's records but separate from pupils' personal records.