

SILCHESTER CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Mission Statement: We aim to provide the highest quality of teaching and learning for all our children. We seek to create a Christian environment that is open, stimulating, safe and caring.

We strive to value each individual and encourage attitudes of self-respect, responsibility and tolerance.

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PURPOSE: The Education Act 2002 requires governing bodies to have procedures to deal with complaints not covered by other existing statutory requirements and to publicise these procedures.

The vast majority of concerns are dealt with immediately, satisfactorily and at an informal stage. Silchester School encourages this through its own individual ethos and effective communication systems. However, occasionally things can go wrong and it is not always possible to predict how a minor concern can escalate into a major, stressful and time-consuming complaint. The purpose of this complaints procedure is to help ensure that all parties are aware of, and have confidence in, a clear process and channel of communication.

This document helps clarify the school's, governors' and the local authority's (LA's) role when responding to general complaints.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all parents and carers with children currently attending Silchester Church of England Primary School.

SIGNATURES:

..... (HEAD TEACHER)

..... (CHAIR OF COMMITTEE)



Silchester School has a staged procedure for dealing with complaints about general school matters or about the national curriculum, religious education or related matters, in line with HCC guidelines.

Parents may also use this complaints procedure if it is believed that the school's governing body or the LA are failing to:

- Provide the National Curriculum in the school for your child
- Follow the law on charging for school activities such as school trips
- Provide daily collective worship (in the Anglican tradition), and religious education
- Provide information that as a parent you may require
- Carry out any other statutory duty in relation to the curriculum
- Act reasonably in all the above cases

Preliminary Stage - Informal Approach

As a school we value our relationship with parents and carers of pupils. Consequently, we offer a range of opportunities during the school year for parents/carers to discuss any concerns regarding their child's progress and well-being, or our arrangements for learning.

Occasionally, concerns may arise at other times, and in this case parents/carers should contact the school straight away and ask to discuss the matter with the appropriate member of staff. The member of staff will make a record of the concern/complaint and give advice as to the next stage in the process if the issue is not resolved. The member of staff should advise the parent/carer who to speak to next (see below) and offer a copy of the complaints procedure. The majority of concerns are normally resolved quickly and effectively in this way.

Stage 1 - Headteacher

If the matter is not resolved informally, parents/carers should write to the headteacher stating the nature of their complaint and providing as much evidence to support their case as possible. The headteacher will:

- Acknowledge the complaint within five working days
- Investigate the complaint and meet with the parent/carer (the Headteacher may delegate this to the Deputy Head or other senior member of staff)
- Confirm the outcome of the investigation and offer a resolution in writing within 20 working days

In most cases, we hope the complaint will be dealt with satisfactorily at this stage.

Stage 2 – Chair of Governors

If discussions with the head do not resolve the complaint, parents may write formally to the Chair of Governors, via the school address, who will review the issues and the headteacher's response. The Chair of Governors will:

- Acknowledge the complaint within five working days
- Investigate the complaint and meet with the parent/carer
- Confirm the outcome of the investigation and offer a resolution in writing within 20 working days

Stage 3 – The Governing Body's Complaints Panel

If a parent remains dissatisfied with the outcomes and wishes to pursue a complaint, they may request a hearing with the governing body's complaints panel.

The request should be made in writing to the clerk to the governing body, via the school address and should include information about the:

- Nature of the original complaint
- Steps taken by the headteacher or designated member of staff to deal with the matter
- The headteacher's response
- The chair of governors' response
- Reasons for pursuing the complaint beyond the chair of governors

The school will notify the LA of the parent's request and copy the relevant information to the Assistant County Education Officer (Standards and Improvement Branch).

The Complaints Panel Hearing

The clerk will arrange the hearing within 10 working days of the request and inform parents about the process and agenda.

The complaints panel consists of three governors with no previous involvement in the matter. For complaints specifically about the curriculum and related matters, members will, where possible, be drawn from the governors' curriculum committee.

The complaints panel will follow current HCC guidance (advice for governors and clerks) for conducting complaints panel hearings.

Following the hearing, the panel may:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or part
- uphold the complaint in whole or part
- decide on appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- recommend changes to the school's systems and procedures

Parents will be notified of the panel's decision in writing within 2 working days.

This is the end of the school's internal complaints procedure.

Stage 4

For individual general complaints which relate to internal school matters and which have exhausted the school's complaints procedure (that is, they have completed Stage 3), there is no right of appeal to the LA as it has no powers to direct the school to change its decision.

If a parent is not satisfied with the decision of the governors' complaints panel about matters listed at the beginning of this policy, they may appeal to the LA. The letter of complaint should include copies of information submitted to the governors' complaints panel and the panel's decision letter and explain the reason for appealing to the LA. This should be sent to:

Assistant County Education Officer
Standards and Improvement Branch
County Education Office
The Castle, Winchester
SO23 8UG

The LA will acknowledge the request within 5 days and arrange for a panel of elected Members of the Schools' Monitoring Panel to consider written submissions within 20 days of the date of request. Members of the panel will have had no recent involvement with the school.

The LA panel may request relevant information from the education department. Parents will have the opportunity to submit additional information in support of their complaint.

The LA will inform parents of their decision within 7 days of the panel meeting. Helpful contact at the LA 01962 846572

As we are a church school, any complaints relating to religious education and collective worship should be discussed with the Education Dept. Winchester

Diocese (023 9289 9681 for Director of Education or 023 9289 9680 / 023 9289 9653). The department will arrange a panel of three people who have had no previous involvement or connection with the school. As with the LA, the diocese will consider the submission within 20 days and inform parents of their decision within 7 days of the meeting.

Role of Governors

Where, in the first instance, a complaint is made to a governor the next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure to be followed. Governors will not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal complaints procedure or be involved at an early stage.

Complaints will not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for Stage 3 or for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

Confidentiality

There is a responsibility on **all** parties involved to ensure confidentiality and discretion through out the course of the complaints procedure. Staff and governors will be informed on a 'need to know' basis only