



# St. John's C of E Primary School

## Complaints Policy

School Policy	<b>Prepared by Headteacher based on the EPHA model policy and DfE guidance</b>
School Staff (SLT) were consulted on this document	<b>Summer 2026</b>
It was adopted by the Full Governing Body	<b>Summer 2026</b>
To be reviewed	<b>When updated by DfE</b>

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# St John's C of E Primary School Complaints Policy

## Our Vision

Learn Together • Achieve Together • Celebrate Together  
*"and let your light shine" Matthew 5:16*

## Our Mission Statement

To enable all children to achieve their true potential in a caring and inclusive community based on Christian values.

## Our Values

Respect • Responsibility • Kindness • Truthfulness • Perseverance

## 1 Who can make a complaint

This Complaints Policy is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to St John's CofE Primary School about any facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use the procedures within this Complaints Policy.

Our Complaints Policy is in line with the DfE/Ofsted/[Parentkind Parent guide to school complaints](#) (published in 2026), which gives parents clear steps to share their views and resolve issues quickly and positively. This guide can be found on the school website.

## 2 The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action'.

Parents and schools share the same goal: supporting children's education.

It is in everyone's interest that issues are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of this Complaints Policy. At this school we take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

**Guidance on raising concerns is on the school website, with details regarding who to make contact with for different types of concern.**

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, you will be referred to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, you will be referred to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

In this case, we will attempt to resolve the issue through the procedures outlined within this Complaints Policy.

### 3 Confidentiality

When participating in the complaints procedure each party automatically agrees to undertake to not at any time disclose to any person (or more widely on social media) any confidential information concerning any part of the complaints procedure, including but not limited to any personal information regarding any party to the complaint (including any personal information which may be used to identify the Complainant or the person subject to the complaint), the content of the complaint, and the timeline and result of the complaint, except as permitted by the following clause:

Each party may disclose the other party's confidential information to any professional or volunteer who are required to know such information for the purposes of carrying out the complaints procedure or as may be required by law, a court of competent jurisdiction or any governmental or regulatory authority.

### 4 Scope of this Complaints Policy

This policy covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services provided by St John's Primary School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions to schools</li> <li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>• School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul>	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Essex County Council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The LADO can be contacted using: 03330 139 797</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p>*complaints about the application of the Behaviour Policy can be made through the school's complaints procedures. Please refer to our Behaviour Policy on the school website.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal Whistleblowing Policy for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedures. You may also be able to complain directly to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's Grievance Policy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the Complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	Providers should have their own complaints procedures to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Curriculum - content</li> </ul>	Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

## 5 Legal Action

If a Complainant commences legal action against St John’s Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedures in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded, and the school will seek legal advice accordingly.

## 6 Complaints Procedure

### 6.1 How to make a complaint

Initial contact regarding a complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a Complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

To progress with a formal complaint, the form at Appendix A **must** be completed accordingly.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at later stages of the procedure.

Contact should be made as follows:

Complaint Against	Who to Contact (Investigator)
School Staff (except the Headteacher)	Headteacher
Headteacher	Chair of Governors (via school office)
Chair of Governors	Vice Chair of Governors (via school office)
Individual Governors (not Chair)	Chair of Governors (via school office)

**Please mark all complaints as Private and Confidential.**

The complaint form is included at the end of this procedure (Appendix A). If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable Complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting Complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

#### 6.1.1 Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Investigator will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation. If we can find out enough information to take the

complaint further, or if the complaint is serious, we will follow this policy as closely as we can. If we cannot find out any other information or the complaint is not serious, we will take no further steps, although the complaint will be logged.

### **6.1.2 Time scales**

The Complainant must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

### **6.1.3 Complaints received outside of term time**

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

## **6.2 How the complaint will be responded to**

The person who received your complaint is the Investigator and they will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within three school days.

Within this response, they may seek to clarify any aspect and can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

During the investigation, the Investigator will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Investigator will provide a formal written response within fifteen school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Investigator is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The Investigator will advise the Complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

## **6.3 How to escalate if you are dissatisfied with the outcome**

If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to a meeting with members of the Governing Body's Appeals Committee. This is the final stage of these complaint procedures.

A request to escalate to governors must be made to the Chair of Governors, via the school office, within ten school days of receipt of the outcome response. The form to complete is attached to this policy. (Appendix B).

The Chair of Governors will record the date the escalation request is received and acknowledge receipt in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Chair of Governors will write to the Complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within twenty school days of receipt of the escalation request. If this is not possible, the Chair of Governors will provide an anticipated date and keep the Complainant informed.

If the Complainant rejects the offer of two proposed dates, without good reason, the Chair of Governors will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the Complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The Governing Body Appeals Committee will consist of three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from the school available, the Chair of Governors will source any additional, independent governors in order to make up the Committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent Committee may be convened.. The Chair of Governors will arrange clerking services for the committee.

The Committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the Complainant's needs.

If the Complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least five school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the Complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the Complainant is invited, that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the Committee at least three school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least two school days before the date of the meeting. The Committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The Committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from the initial stage of this procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a Complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The Committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The Committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the Committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the Complainant and St John's Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within ten school days. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions St John's Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The letter to the Complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school.

The Committee will ensure that those findings and recommendations are provided to the Complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about and that they are available for inspection on the school premises by the Local Authority and the Headteacher.

## **7 Record Keeping**

The school will provide for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with these procedures and whether they are resolved following the first formal stage or proceed to a Governing Body Appeals Committee.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

## **8 Next Steps if you remain dissatisfied**

If the Complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published Complaints Policy or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed these procedures.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school. They will consider whether St John's Primary School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD.

The Local Authority (Essex County Council) has no powers to intervene in complaints against schools. The Complainant can complain to Ofsted if they think a school is not run properly and needs inspecting. However, Ofsted will not look into problems with individual pupils, e.g. exclusions or not getting a place at the school.

## **9 How we manage serial and unreasonable complaints**

St John's Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact Complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable

behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

St John's Primary School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the Complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the Complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the Complaints Policy
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the Complaints Policy or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's Complaints Policy has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Investigator will discuss any concerns with the Complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Investigator will write to the Complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For Complainants who excessively contact St John's Primary School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from St John's Primary School as stipulated in the Parent / Carer Code of Conduct.

**Appendix A – Complaint form:**

**St John’s CofE Primary School**

*Please complete this form and return it the school office for the attention of the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or Vice Chair of Governors accordingly.*

Your name:

Relationship with school (e.g. parent):

Pupil’s name (if relevant to your complaint):

Your address:

Telephone number:

Email address:

Please give concise details of your complaint (including dates, names of witnesses, etc) to allow the matter to be fully investigated:

Please continue on a separate sheet or attach additional documents if you wish.  
Number of additional pages attached =

What action, if any, have you already taken to resolve your complaint?

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

Signature:

Date:

**Appendix B - Complaint escalation request form** *(must be sent within 10 school days of receiving Stage 2 outcome notice):*

### **St John's CofE Primary School**

*Please complete this form and return it the school office for the attention of the Chair of Governors.*

Your name:

Relationship with school (e.g. parent):

Pupil's name (if relevant to your complaint):

Your address:

Telephone number:

<p>I submitted a formal complaint to the school on ....., and I am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed.</p> <p>My complaint was submitted to ..... and I received a response from ..... on .....</p> <p>I have attached copies of my formal complaint and the response(s) from the school. I am dissatisfied with the way in which the procedure was carried out, because.....</p>
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Please continue on separate paper or attach additional documents if you wish.  
Number of additional pages attached =

<p>What actions do you feel might resolve the complaint at this stage?</p>
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Signature:

Date: