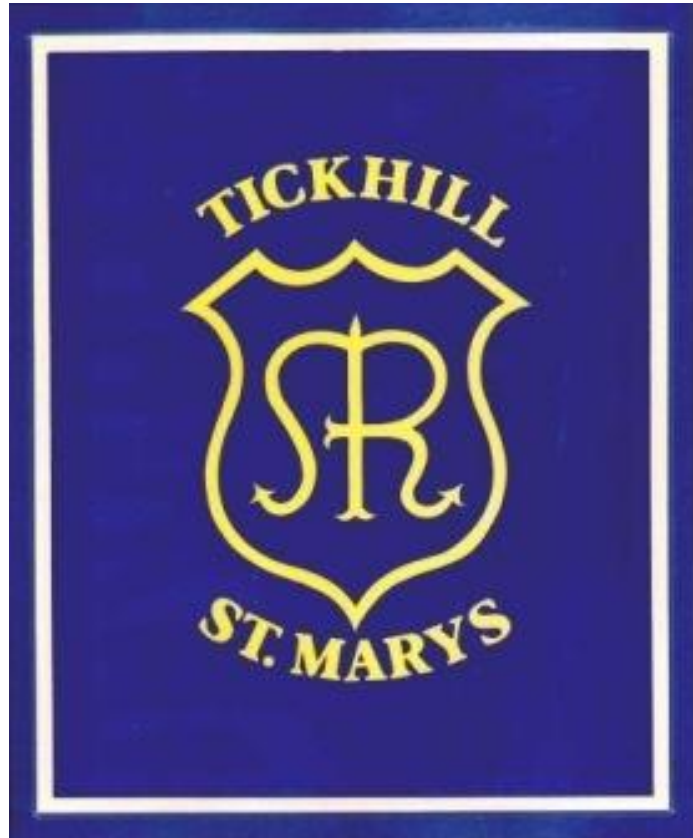


St Mary's C.E. Primary and Nursery School



Complaints Policy

Growing together, learning together

Monitoring and Review

It is the responsibility of our Governing Body to agree and monitor our policies. The Curriculum and Standards Team has this responsibility, though the day to day management of it is devolved to the Head Teacher.

As with all our policies, this was developed following a period of practice and consultation before being presented for Governors' consideration.

R Kendrew-Jones

Mission Statement

'Here at St Mary's Church of England Primary School, through our Christian values, we aspire to nurture and educate the whole child: caring for their well-being, celebrating their individual talents and abilities whilst encouraging them to become lifelong learners. It is our aim that children, parents/carers and school staff should work together towards this end.'

Equal Opportunities

At Tickhill St Mary's School we are committed to giving all our children every opportunity to achieve the highest of standards. We acknowledge the right of every individual to be treated fairly, with respect and to their individual needs regardless of appearance, age, race, gender identity, background, creed, attainment, ability or sexual orientation. We aim to fulfil this ideal through our policies and practice.

Christian Ethos

Tickhill St Mary's School is a Church of England School and, as such, we ensure that the Christian ethos is central to all our policies and practice.

Safeguarding Statement

St Mary's Primary School is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people, and expects all staff to adhere to this commitment.

Part A: Parent Complaints against the school

Aims:

- To ensure that complaints are listened to wholly with a non-bias opinion and treated with fairness and understanding.
- To deal promptly and effectively with any issues that arise from a complaint.

Introduction

We are committed to an open door culture of full and open partnership with parents. We aspire to form and maintain good channels of communication and welcome feedback from parents/carers as an important part of our commitment to improve. We appreciate any concerns being raised immediately to enable us to follow through and ensure that issues causing disquiet are managed effectively and prompt action taken in the early stages.

General Complaint procedure for School

Any problem or concern should be raised promptly with the class teacher or member of staff responsible for the area or action you are concerned about. Many small issues causing anxiety will be dealt with very effectively at this level and the Head teacher will be informed as part of working communication. If your concern is more serious you may prefer to make an appointment to discuss it with the Head teacher. All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem promptly at this informal stage. Most concerns and potential

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complaints can best be resolved through informal discussion with the relevant member of staff or Head teacher.

Stage 1 (Headteacher)

If you are dissatisfied with the response of the member of staff (or the Head teacher if they have been involved at the informal stage) then you will need to put your concerns in writing, using the complaints form attached as an appendix, to the Head teacher as a complaint. You should make it clear if you wish the matter to be dealt with as a complaint. The Head teacher will investigate the complaint and provide a written response. This will normally be within 10 school days of your letter being received, but you will be kept informed if, for example, more time is required to complete the investigation.

If your original concern was about an action by the Head teacher personally, and you have already discussed it at the informal stage, then you should put your complaint in writing, again using the attached form, to the chair of governors (stage 2).

Stage 2 (Governors)

If you are not satisfied with the Head teacher's response, you may contact the chair of governors, through the school office.

The Chair will appoint a member/s of the Governing Body most suited to investigate your complaint and, in most cases, seek to resolve the matter through discussion with yourself and the Headteacher. At the end of this stage the investigating governor/s will provide you with a written response. This investigation will normally be within 10 school days from the start of this stage, with the written response an additional 10 days after this, however you will be kept informed if more time is needed.

Stage 3 (Governors decision appeal process)

If you are not satisfied with the governors' response at the end of stage 2, the complaint can be referred to the full Governing Body by writing to the chair or clerk to the Governing Body. The Governing Body will ask a small panel of different governors, usually 3, including the chair of governors to investigate your complaint. This will normally be arranged within 15 school days of your stage 3 complaint being received, depending on the availability of all concerned. You may be invited to speak to the panel at a meeting and be accompanied by a friend or representative. After the meeting you will be advised of the outcome in writing. This will normally be within 10 school days of the meeting.

For most complaints the decision of the governors appeal panel is the last step in the procedure.

School Curriculum Complaint procedure

There is a specific procedure for complaints about the school curriculum and matters relating to it, including the provision of information and charges. In general these are dealt with in a similar way to other complaints. However, there are some specific differences –

You may complain either to the Local Authority (LA) or the Governing Body in the first instance.

The complaint will be investigated by whichever of these is responsible for the matter complained about.

The Governing Body will inform both the complainant and the LA of the outcome of its investigation.

There is a right of appeal to the LA, and then to the Secretary of State.

For Aided Schools, there is a right of appeal to the Diocese on matters of Religious Education and Collective Worship. If you are in doubt whether your complaint comes into this category, or would like a copy of the full procedure for complaints relating to the school curriculum, please contact the School.

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In general, internal school matters are the responsibility of the school Governing Body. However, you may have a complaint which relates to something which is the Local Authority's responsibility. The LA will provide advice to parents and schools on best practice procedures for dealing with complaints. The LA will, where appropriate, check to make sure that the complaint has been reasonably dealt with. Where required, Local Authority officers may play a role in helping schools to investigate and resolve particular complaints.

School admissions and exclusions

Separate complaint and appeal procedures exist for these matters, and appropriate information is available on request from the school.

Special needs

There is a separate appeal procedure for these matters, and appropriate information is available on request from the school.

Complaints against school staff

If your complaint amounts to or includes an allegation against a member of staff, this may need to be considered under the school's disciplinary procedure for employees, rather than the complaint procedure. You will be advised if these procedures are to be used in dealing with your complaint.

A complaint about the Local Authority

Procedures for complaining about the Local Authority are set out in a separate document about the Council's complaints procedure. A copy of this document is available from the Council offices. Complaints should be made in the first instance to the head of the service or section concerned. If you are still not satisfied you may complain to the Director of Education and Cultural Services.

Part B: Staff Complaints against parents or other users of the school facilities

Aim: To ensure that systems are communicated to protect staff from inappropriate behaviour and/or complaint.

Although staff seek to operate at all times in a calm, measured and non-threatening manner, there may be occasions from time to time when a parent responds inappropriately to a situation.

In cases where the staff member feels they may be at potential risk of verbal or other abuse, they ensure that another member of staff is with them as well as informing the school office that the interview is taking place.

The member of staff should, wherever possible, conduct the meeting as close to the school office as possible, and/or have a telephone immediately beside them. If the situation becomes uncomfortable or threatening in any way, the member of staff leading the meeting will immediately undertake the following escalatory actions:-

- a) The person will be warned that their manner is causing discomfort
- b) The person will be asked to leave the premises
- c) The police will be called to remove the person from the premises

If the police are called to attend such an incident, a prosecution may be pursued for a Public Order Offence, which carries a fixed penalty fine.

At the Headteacher's discretion, a follow up letter will be sent, outlining the nature of the complaint being made against them and detailing steps which may be taken in future if the behaviour is repeated in addition to seeking to address the causal issues in written format.

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Where a person has demonstrated inappropriate/threatening behavior previously in the school, they may be placed into the category of persistent/vexatious, and the following actions may be taken

- a) Notification given that any further interviews will only be agreed to if a member of the Governing Body are present
- b) Notification given that all further communication will only be accepted in writing
- c) Notification given of a ban from the school premises for purposes other than the delivery or collection of children

Part C: Unreasonable and persistent complaints

Unreasonable complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- 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 procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information that 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 complaint procedure 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

Please note: the above list is not intended to be exhaustive and is for guidance purposes only. It is at the discretion of the school what is deemed to be unreasonable.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school 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.

Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's comments and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or chair of governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable, refer them to this policy and remind them to act in accordance with it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as Citizens Advice
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

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 school premises and ensuring appropriate measures of support are provided to staff where they are the subject of aggression and/or violence.

Serial/persistent complaints

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent'. We may stop responding to the complainant when the following conditions are met:

- We have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case to stop responding is stronger if:

- The complainant's communications are often or always abusive or aggressive
- The complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

Where we decide to stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will consider any new complaints they make provided the concerns raised are materially different to those raised previously and/or are unconnected to the previous concern

Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

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If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and that the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If a duplicate complaint is raised, which in the view of the school, warrants further consideration, the procedure outlined in section 6 or 7 (as appropriate) will be repeated.

Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

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Appendix 1

School Complaints Procedure

Please complete and return to the school office marked for the attention of the Chair of Governors.

Your name:	
Pupil's name:	
Your relationship to the pupil:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone number:	

Please give details of your complaint:	
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<p>What action have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? Who did you speak to and what was the response?)</p>	
<p>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</p>	
<p>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details</p>	
<p>Signature:</p>	
<p>Date:</p>	

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Office use

Date received:	
Acknowledgement sent:	
By whom:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	