

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE



SEPTEMBER 2025

Approved at committee:

19th November 2025

Adopted & ratified by full governing body:

19th November 2025

St Thomas' Leesfield CE Primary School

General Complaints Procedures

Our Christian Vision

'To be the best we can in the sight of God'

Inspired by St Paul's teaching 'You are all one in Christ' (Galations 3:28)

We aspire for everyone in our school family to be accepted and be accepting, welcoming all. To be a community that treats others equally, with respect and kindness. To be aspirational, having hope and celebrating the value and purpose of our unique abilities. To love learning and to embrace new experiences and challenges with courage and creativity, as we become the best version of ourselves. We want to promote peace. To love and serve our diverse local and global community, making a difference for others.

Rationale

Occasionally, individuals may wish to raise concerns or make a particular complaint about a matter that has arisen at the school. It is good practice to have clearly set out procedures, which are available to any interested parties, to inform them how their concerns can be dealt with.

These procedures do not cover those aspects of school life for which there are specific statutory requirements, for example, school admission procedures, issues around collective worship and religious education or special needs assessments. There are also specific procedures for dealing with complaints relating to safeguarding matters, about child abuse, financial improprieties or other criminal activities. Persons wishing to raise complaints of this nature should ask the Headteacher or the Local Authority for information about any of these specific procedures.

The school acknowledges that sometimes things do go wrong for all kinds of reasons and we encourage persons wishing to raise a concern or complaint to do so as soon as possible to enable the school to address matters as quickly and act to where needed promptly put things right. The school will not normally consider complaints which relate to incidents or matters that are over 3 months old. This is because due to the passage of time it may not always be possible to thoroughly and fairly investigate historic matters. The Head Teacher will however assess each complaint and may decide to use his discretion where it is felt reasonable to do so, to look at complaint matters which are outside of this timeframe.

Background

This procedure is based on the General Complaints Guidance provided by the Local Authority and the Departmental Advice issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in August 2014. It has also been created following recent guidelines – January 2021 - Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2020 which was also issued by the DfE. Furthermore, it also follows guidance from Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 with

regards to complaints around the provision for children with Special Educational Needs (SEND). Please note that the same procedure is followed for complaints from parents of children with SEND.

St Thomas' Leesfield believes in a partnership between home, school and the wider community and our School Christian Vision highlights our determination to create an ethos which will enhance good relationships. We would hope that persons who have concerns would feel able to talk with either a class teacher, the Learning Mentor or the Headteacher to resolve these as amicably and quickly as possible.

The purpose of these formal procedures is to outline the stages which may be followed if persons feel that their concerns have not been resolved informally, and they wish to make a formal complaint.

The Governors do take the wellbeing of all school staff seriously and will ensure there is pastoral care and support to staff available as needed throughout all stages of the complaint process.

Any complaints against the Chair of Governors or any individual governor should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body. Complaints about the Head Teacher should be referred to the Chair of Governors. Should the complaint be about the SEND support provided by school, it is advised that the concern is discussed with our Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO) in the first instance.

There are 3 formal stages to the procedures.

The first contact (Informal Resolution).

Individuals must feel able to raise concerns with any member of staff without any formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. The staff member approached should reassure the person that the school wants to hear about their concerns and will take their concerns seriously. Most concerns can usually be resolved informally through the class teacher and a person may want to have a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether they wish to take the matter further.

If a person indicates that they are having difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, the Headteacher can arrange for another staff member to respond.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a concern, the Headteacher may consider referring the person raising the concern 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 crucial.

Where the first approach is made to a governor, the next step would be for the governor to refer the person raising the concern to the appropriate person and advise them about the complaint procedure. Governors should not act unilaterally or become involved in an individual complaint outside the formal procedure, or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a complaint panel at a later stage of the procedure

The member of staff in responding to the concern may explain to the person how the situation happened and will try to identify with them the sort of outcome that the person is

looking for to resolve matters.

- 1.1 If the member of staff cannot immediately deal with the matter, s/he should make a clear note of the date, person's name, contact address or phone number.
- 1.2 The member of staff dealing with the concern should make sure that the person is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting this in writing only if this seems to be the best way of making things clear.
- 1.3 If the member of staff initially approached feels unable to deal with the concern, or is the subject of the complaint, s/he should refer it immediately to a member of the Senior Leadership Team or Headteacher.
- 1.4 If the matter cannot be resolved and the person wishes to make a formal complaint, then they should be advised of the school complaint process and that they can complete a complaint form detailing their complaint and any outcome they are seeking to resolve matter

Formal Process Stage 1: Referral to the Headteacher.

The Headteacher has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school and has, therefore, the responsibility for the implementation of the complaint's procedure, including the decision about their own involvement at various stages. The Headteacher at St. Thomas' Leesfield acts as the complaint's coordinator. Upon receipt of a formal complaint:

- 2.1 The Headteacher should offer an opportunity for the complainant to meet with him within 3 working days to confirm the complaint details and requested outcome, (where possible this should be confirmed in writing). The Head will also gather any additional information needed from the complainant. The complainant may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative or representative who can support them in making their complaint (not a legal representative). The Headteacher may also be accompanied by another member of staff.
- 2.2 Once all the relevant facts have been established, if the complaint cannot be resolved within the meeting, the Headteacher may then need to conduct a formal investigation into the complaint and in doing so may speak with others involved, review information available and consider any relevant records policies or procedures. The Head may delegate the task of collating the information to another member of staff but not the decision on the outcome and any action to be taken.
- 2.3 Once the investigation is complete the Headteacher will provide the complainant with a written outcome and details of any action to be taken and may want to further meet with the complainant to discuss his response.
- 2.4 If there is no resolution found, and the complainant wants to progress matters to the next stage, the complainant will be asked to complete the complaint form (Appendix 1). The complainant should clearly outline why they are unhappy with the Head Teacher's response and what further remedy they are seeking to resolve matters.

Stage 2: Referral to the Chair of Governors.

If the matter is not resolved or the complaint is against the Headteacher, it will be referred to the Chair of Governors.

- 3.1 A meeting will be arranged between the complainant, the Chair of Governors and another Governor (who will refer to 2.3). The complainant may be accompanied by a friend, relative or representative who can support them. The aim of this meeting is

- to discuss why the complainant is unhappy with the initial response and what further resolution they are seeking. It should provide opportunity for further resolution where this is possible (if felt helpful, at the discretion of the Chair, a further meeting involving the Headteacher and any staff involved may be offered).
- 3.2 The Chair of Governors and Parent Governor, at their discretion, may wish to undertake some further investigation before providing the complainant with a further written response which will advise them that if they remain unhappy with this response and the way the school has responded to their complaint so far, they can request that their complaint is referred to a Governing Body Complaint Panel and information should be provided about how they can do this.

Stage 3: Review by a Governing Body Complaint Panel.

In the unlikely event that the matter has not been resolved at the earlier stages, on receipt of a Panel request, the complainant will be asked to agree in writing what they wish the Governor Panel to review and what further outcome they are seeking from the Panel. Prior to the Panel meeting the complainant will be asked in advance of the Panel to provide this, and any further supporting written evidence they wish the Panel to consider. The complainant will be asked to provide this information to the school within 5 working days of their request for a Panel to be held.

At this stage the Chair may seek advice from the Local Authority or the Diocesan Board of Education. Where the Chair has any previous involvement in the complaint, the panel will be convened by the Vice-Chair or other nominated Governor.

- 4.1 On receipt of the panel request, the Chair, Vice-Chair or nominated Governor will arrange for a panel meeting to be convened which will be made up of 3 members of the Governing Body. The Chair, Vice-Chair or nominated Governor must ensure that no member of the panel has a conflict of interest in respect of the complaint or proceedings or has had any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.
- 4.2 The Chair/Vice-Chair/nominated Governor will ensure that the complaint is heard by the Panel within 20 working days of receiving the request.
- 4.3 A Panel Information Pack should be compiled containing the details of the complaint, initial responses and any additional information/evidence provided by the complainant along with any information/evidence the school wishes the panel to review. The panel information pack should be provided to all parties attending the panel no later than 3 full working days prior to the panel meeting taking place. No additional written documentation will be accepted by the panel on the day unless the Chair deems there are exceptional circumstances involved that would warrant that the panel adjourns to consider this.
- 4.4 Attendance at the Panel of any witnesses, or other persons or professionals will be at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel.
- 4.5 The Chair/Vice-Chair/nominated Governor will inform the complainant, the Headteacher and any relevant others of the date, time and place of the meeting at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting. The letter will also inform the complainant of their right to be accompanied by a friend/representative or advocate (not a legal representative). The letter will also explain the format of the meeting and of the complainant's right to submit information for the Panel Information Pack. The Chair/Vice Chair/nominated Governor will also consider any requests from the complainant in respect of additional support needs they may

- have.
- 4.6 The Chair/Vice-Chair/nominated Governor will invite the Headteacher to attend the Panel meeting and to prepare a written report for the Panel in response to the complaint. The Head may also, subject to approval by the Chair,
- 4.7 invite any members of staff directly involved to respond in writing or in person to the complaint. All relevant documents must be received from all concerned no later than 5 working days prior to the meeting.
- 4.8 The involvement of staff other than the Head is at the discretion of the Chair/Vice-Chair/nominated Governor.
- 4.9 It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Panel to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. The clerk to the panel will be impartial and have no prior involvement with the complaint.
- 4.10 The aim of the meeting is to consider the complaint, look at how the school has dealt with the complaint, try to further resolve matters if this is possible and try to achieve a reconciliation between the complainant and the school. It must be recognised, however, that sometimes it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has at least been taken seriously.
- 4.11 The Chair of the Panel should ensure that the proceedings are as un-intimidating as possible as many complainants may be unused to dealing with groups of people in formal situations.
- 4.12 If the complainant fails to attend the hearing without good reason the complaint will be deemed to have been withdrawn, and the procedure will be at an end.
- 4.13 **The Panel Meeting:**
- Should be as informal as possible.
 - All parties should be treated with equal respect and be respectful of each other
 - Any witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
 - All panel discussion will usually take place via the Chair.
 - After introductions, the complainant will be invited to explain their complaint and clarify any further resolution they are seeking, and the Panel will hear from any relevant witnesses if they are present.
 - The Panel members will have opportunity to ask questions or seek any clarification
 - The Headteacher will then be invited to explain the school's actions and outline how they have tried to resolve matters to date and may address any issues relating to what the complainant or their witnesses may have stated. This is followed by any school witnesses.
 - The panel members will ask any questions or ask for clarification
 - There may be further discussion at the discretion of the Panel Chair
 - The complainant and school are then invited to add any further additional comment they wish the panel to consider before it closes.
- 4.14 Before closing the meeting, the Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and the Headteacher that the Panel will now consider its decision, and a written decision letter will be sent to both parties usually within 5 working days. The complainant, the Headteacher and any other attendees will then leave the meeting.
- 4.15 The Panel will then consider the complaint, and all the information /evidence presented, to reach a unanimous, or majority, decision on the complaint and decide

- upon any appropriate recommended action to be taken in respect of the outcome and way forward regarding the complaint.
- 4.16 Recommendations may include things such as a suggested change to a school's system or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again, that a formal apology is issued where this is felt to be warranted or that training for staff is arranged.
 - 4.17 A written statement letter outlining the decision of the Panel and any recommendations will be sent to both the complainant and the Headteacher.
 - 4.18 The school must ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes is kept on file in the school's records. These records must be kept separate from the children's records.
 - 4.19 As the Governor Complaint panel meeting is the final stage of the school-based complaint process, the complainant should be notified within the written statement letter of their right to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education if they remain dissatisfied with the way the school has handled their complaint.
 - 4.20 Following the Panel the school will consider the complaint matters to be closed.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Headteacher monitors all policy and procedures in school and these including the Complaint Procedure outlined here are reviewed regularly by Governors – annually unless earlier is deemed necessary.

Headteacher: Mr J Whittaker

Chair of Governors: Mrs Hannah Jackson

Date approved: 19th November 2025

Stages for Handling Complaints

Informal Resolution

- Expression of concern to a member of staff.
- Satisfactory outcome reached?
Yes – no further action taken.
No – Can proceed to Formal process Stage 1.

Stage 1: Headteacher's investigation

- Complainant makes a complaint to the Headteacher.
- Investigation conducted and reported to the complainant, written response provided.
- Satisfactory outcome reached?
- Yes – no further action taken
- No – Can proceed to Stage 2.
- Complainant to complete complaint form appendix 1.

Stage 2: Referral to Chair of Governors

- Complainant meets with Chair of Governors and a parent Governor
- Chair of Governors and parent Governor try to further resolve and may conduct further investigation. Written outcome provided to complainant.
- Satisfactory outcome reached?
Yes – no further action taken.
No – Complainant has right to request a Governing Body Complaint Panel Meeting be arranged to review their complaint.

Stage 3: Governors' review

- Invites arranged and Panel Information Pack collated and provided to all attendees.
- Panel made up of 3 Governors arranged, Complainant and Head Teacher invited to attend.
- Following the Panel meeting the Complainant and Headteacher are advised in writing of the Panel/Governors' decision, and of their right to appeal to the Secretary of State.

A full copy of the General Complaints Procedure is available in school, and on the school's website.

Complaint Form

Appendix 2

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

Please give details of your complaint:

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What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (who did you speak with and what was the response)?

What do you feel will resolve the problem at this stage?

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

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Received by: _____ **Date:** _____

Complaint referred to: _____ **Date:** _____

DATA PROTECTION STATEMENT

The procedures and practice created by this policy have been reviewed in the light of our Data Protection Policy. All data will be handled in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy.

Data Audit For The Complaints Policy					
What ?	Probable Content	Why ?	Who ?	Where ?	When ?
Written information regarding the complaint	Name D.O.B. Written information regarding specific children and specific staff and their actions within the complaint	For a fair and consistent approach for Head/Governors to review the complaint	Headteacher Governor	Paper copies stored securely by Head or Governor in a locked cabinet in Heads office	Held on File throughout complaint and then destroyed. If Complaint goes to Panel review then meeting is minuted and information is held securely by Panel lead (who will then take legal advice as to when the information is destroyed or where it is to be held and until when)

As such, our assessment is that this policy:

Has Few / No Data Compliance Requirements	Has A Moderate Level of Data Compliance Requirements	Has a High Level Of Data Compliance Requirements
		✓

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if legislation / school assessment systems change.