

## **St Paul’s C.E. Primary School Neville Road**

### **Complaints Policy**

#### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 At St Paul’s School we provide a good education and positive learning environment for all our children, and the headteacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with parents and carers. The safety and safeguarding of all pupils is of paramount consideration at all times. As a result, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case any parent/carer should wish to make a complaint. The following policy sets out the procedures to be followed by the school in such instances.
- 1.2 We encourage all parents to express their views on what goes on within school, so that potential difficulties or problems can be avoided and be prevented from escalating into a formal complaint. We encourage parents/carers to undertake a preliminary discussion, initially with the class teacher, to help answer concerns and decide whether or not formal complaint procedures are needed.
- 1.3 We deal with all complaints in accordance with the procedures set out by the Local Authority (LA). If the school cannot resolve any complaint itself, complainants can approach the LA to intervene.

#### **The Complaints Procedure**

#### **2 Preliminary**

- 2.1 If a parent/carer is concerned about anything to do with the education that is provided at the school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child’s class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. Teachers need to know if there is a problem, so that action can be taken before it affects a child’s progress and happiness in school.
- 2.2 On no account should an approach be made by the complainant to any other person connected with the school at this or any other stage, whether staff or governor. Any governors or staff member receiving such an approach should report it immediately to the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors.**

#### **3 Stage 1 – Informal**

- 3.1 If after the preliminary discussion a parent/carer feels the situation has not been resolved, they can make an informal complaint, in person or by writing. It is

expected that most of the concerns and complaints that get to this stage will also be resolved at this stage through the opportunity for full discussion with the class teacher.

3.2 The parents/carers should explain the nature of the complaint fully and what sort of outcome they are looking for.

3.3 The teacher will keep a dated record of the discussion and the action arising from it.

3.4 If no solution satisfactory to the parents/carers has been found within 10 working days, they will be asked if they wish their concern to be moved to Stage 2 of the procedure.

#### **4 Stage 2 – Referral to the Headteacher for Investigation**

4.1 In some cases this will be the Headteacher’s first involvement; in others, s/he may already have been involved in any investigations/actions undertaken at Stage 1. In the case of the latter, she will request the Chair of Governors to investigate on her behalf or nominate another member of the governing body to do this.

4.2 The Headteacher will acknowledge the request to move to Stage 2 in writing (letter or email) within 3 days. The letter should give an outline of the Stage 2 procedure and a target date for the response, ideally within 10 working days. Because of the voluntary nature of governors’ work, if the investigation is being carried out by a governor it may take longer than 2 weeks, in which case the parents/carers should be made aware of this and kept fully informed of progress.

4.3 The Headteacher or designated person will make an appointment with the parents/carers to discuss this. If it is needed to resolve the complaint, the Headteacher/designate will interview witnesses and take statements from them. If the complaint centres on another pupil, that pupil should be interviewed with parents/carers present. The Headteacher/designate must keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations, interviews and other relevant documentation.

4.4 Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher/designate will produce a written response. They may then choose to meet the parents/carers to discuss/resolve the complaint directly.

4.5 In any event, the written response must be sent to the parents/carers within 3 working weeks. The report should include a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it, and where appropriate, the action the school intends to take to resolve the issue.

4.6 If the parents/carers are unhappy with the outcome and wish to refer the complaint to the Governing Body (Stage 3), they should notify the Chair of Governors via the School Office within 25 days of receiving the written response.

4.5 If, after 25 days, no communication has been received, the complaint is deemed to have been resolved and the school need take no further action.

### **5 Stage 3: Review by the Governing Body**

5.1 The Chair of Governors will write to the parents/carers (henceforth know as the complainant(s)) to acknowledge receipt of the request to move to Stage 3 and to inform parents of her decision.

5.2 The complaint will be considered by a panel of 3 governors, including the Chair, within 20 working days of receiving the complaint. The panel should not include any governor who has had prior involvement with the complaint. If the Chair of Governors was designated by the Headteacher to oversee Stage 2 proceedings, the Vice-Chair must chair the panel.

5.3 The Chair/Vice Chair will inform the other panel members, the parents, the Headteacher and any possible witnesses s/he may wish to call, of the date, time and venue of the meeting at least 5 working days in advance.

5.4 All relevant documents, including a written report by the Headteacher in response to the complaint should be received by all concerned 5 working days prior to the meeting.

5.5 The Headteacher may invite members of staff involved directly in the complaint to respond in writing, or to attend the meeting at the discretion of the Chair/Vice Chair.

5.6 The meeting should be conducted in as informal a way as possible, while ensuring that the following take place:

The complainants explain their complaint, and the Headteacher explains the school’s response

The Headteacher questions the complainants about the complaint and they question the Head and/or other staff member about the response

Panel members have the opportunity to question both

If witnesses are called with the consent of the Chair, all parties can question all witnesses

The Head and the complainants make final statements.

5.7 After the meeting the panel will consider the complaint and the evidence, and a) reach a unanimous (or majority) decision on it, b)decide on the appropriate

action to be taken to resolve it, and c) where appropriate, suggest changes to school systems/procedures to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

5.8 The Chair should inform the Headteacher and the complainant in writing of the outcomes within 15 working days.

5.9 If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome, s/he has the option to proceed to Stage 4.

## **6 Stage 4: Beyond the Governing Body**

6.1 The Local Authority: complaints can be taken to the relevant officers of the LA at this stage. Information about who to contact can be obtained at the School Office. Complainants should be informed at all stages that if they contact the LA before all the school-based stages have been explored, they will be referred back to the school.

6.2 The Secretary of State may be contacted under Section 496 of the Education Act 1996 on the grounds that a Governing Body or LA acted unreasonably, or under Section 497 that it failed to discharge its duties under the Act. The Secretary of State may request further information from the Governors or the LA.

## **7 Complaints against the Headteacher**

7.1 If the complaint relates to the Headteacher, the parent/carer should contact the Chair of the Governing Body via the School Office. The Chair will then carry out the necessary investigation. **On no account should an informal approach be made to any other member of the Governing Body. Any governor receiving such an approach should report it immediately to the Chair of Governors.**

## **8 Monitoring and Review**

8.1 The Governing Body monitors the complaints procedure in order to ensure that the policy is fully complied with. All complaints to the school and their outcomes are logged. The Governors examine this log on an annual basis (delegated to School Effectiveness Committee who will report back to the full Governing Body).

8.2 This policy is reviewed on a rolling programme and modified in the light of local or national decisions and changes in procedure which affect it.

8.3 This policy is made available to all parents and carers so that they can be made aware of the relevant procedures (in School Office/on website).

Signed:

Date:

## Complaints Policy – St Paul’s CE Primary School