



THE SAINTS FEDERATION

Complaints Policy

Document Control

Organisation	The Saints’ Federation All Saints’ C/W Primary School St. David’s Primary School St. Mellons CiW Primary School
Title	Complaints Policy
Author	Executive Head Teacher and Governing Body
Owner	Executive Head Teacher and Governing Body
Protective Marking	NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED
Review date	Every 3 years or sooner if required

Revision History

Written March 2024

Review date March 2027

Revision Date	Revision	Previous Version	Description of Revision
March 2024		N/A	Policy created and adopted by The Saints Federation GB
May 2026	2.0		No Changes - Addition of St. Mellons to the Saints Federation

Signed by Chair of Governors on behalf of the Governing Body

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Signed by the Executive Headteacher:

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Date approved: (by full Governing Body)

Date of review:

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Introduction

As rights respecting schools we aim to ensure all children, staff and families are aware of children's rights. We aim to, not only teach about children's rights, but also model rights and respect in all relationships. This is linked to Articles 3, 18, 28,29,30 (UNCRC).

Schools within The Saints' Federation value the good relations we enjoy with parents and the community. These good relations are based on a respect for what the federation is achieving, on good communications and the provision of relevant and clear information.

The Saint's Federation is committed to dealing effectively with complaints. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. If possible, we will correct any mistakes we have made, and we will apologise. We aim to learn from mistakes and use that experience to improve what we do.

Our definition of a complaint is that suggested in the Welsh Government 'Complaints Procedure for School Governing Bodies' Guidance (2012). A complaint is 'an expression of dissatisfaction in relation to the school, a governor, or a member of its staff that requires a response from the school.'

If a complaint raises issues about staff capability, staff grievance, staff discipline, admissions, special educational needs provision, the delivery of the curriculum or child protection, then action must be taken under those procedures and they should take precedence.

This policy is a way of ensuring that anyone with an interest in the school can raise a concern, with confidence that it will be heard and, if well founded, addressed in any appropriate and timely fashion and in a way that is compliant with Welsh Government Guidance.

When to use this policy:

This policy lays out the way in which any school within The Saints' Federation, will respond to your complaint. Sometimes you may be concerned about a matter that is not decided by any of the schools or the entire federation, in which case we will tell you who to complain to or what other procedures you may need to use.

Have you asked us yet?

If you are approaching us for the first time, you should allow us an opportunity to respond. If you are not happy with our response, then you may make your complaint formal by using the policy we describe below. Most complaints can be settled quickly just by speaking to the relevant person in school, without the need to use a formal policy.

What we expect from you

We believe that all complainants have a right to be heard, understood, and respected. School staff and governors have the same right. We expect you to be polite and courteous. We will not tolerate aggressive, abusive, or unreasonable behaviour.

Nor will we tolerate unreasonable demands, unreasonable persistence nor vexatious complaining. We have a separate policy to manage situations where we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.

Our general approach to handling complaints:

- Most complaints can be settled quickly in school by speaking to the relevant person in school without a formal procedure.
- We recognise the right of children to be listened to and to participate under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- We believe all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. School staff and governors have the same right and we expect complaints to be made in a polite and courteous way. We will not tolerate aggressive, abusive or unreasonable behaviour. We will also not tolerate unreasonable demands, unreasonable persistence or vexatious complaining.
- We will consider all your complaints in an open and fair way.
- At all times the school will respect the rights and feelings of those involved and make every effort to protect confidential information.
- Timescales for dealing with your complaints may need to be extended following discussion with you.
- Where appropriate, we may ask the local authority or diocesan authority for advice.
- Some types of complaints may raise issues that must be dealt with in another way, in which case we will explain why this is so and tell you what steps need to be taken.
- The governing body will keep the records of documents used to investigate your complaint for seven years after it has been dealt with. After seven years the records will be reviewed to see if they need to be kept for longer.
- Complaints made anonymously will be recorded but investigation will be at the discretion of the school depending on the nature of the complaint.
- Where complaints are considered to have been made only to cause harm or offence to individuals or the school, the Governing Body will ensure that records are kept of the investigations that are made and what actions are taken, including the reasons for 'no action'.

Answering your concern or complaint

There are up to three Stages: A, B and C.

Most complaints can be resolved at Stages A or B. You can bring a relative or companion to support you at any time during the process, but you will be expected to speak for yourself, unless you require special assistance. We also recognise that when the complainant is a pupil it is reasonable for the companion to speak on their behalf and/or to advise the pupil.

As far as possible, your concern or complaint will be dealt with on a confidential basis. However, there could be occasions when the person dealing with your complaint will need to consider whether anyone else within the school needs to know about your complaint, so as to address it appropriately.

If you are a pupil under 16 and wish to raise a complaint, we will ask for your permission before we involve your parent(s) or carer(s). If you are a pupil under 16 and are involved in a complaint in any other way, we may ask your parent(s) or carer(s) to become involved and attend any discussion or interview with you.

Stage A

If you have a complaint, you can often resolve it quickly by talking to your child's class teacher, a member of the senior leadership team, or the Head of School or Executive Headteacher. You should raise your concern as soon as you can; normally we would expect you to raise your issue within **10 school days** of any incident.

The longer you leave it, the harder it might be for those involved to deal with it effectively.

If you are a pupil, you can raise your complaint with your school council representative, class teacher, or a teacher of your choice. This will not stop you, at a later date, from raising a complaint if you feel that the issue(s) you have raised have not been dealt with properly.

We will try to let you know what we have done or are doing about your concern **within 10 school days**, but if this is not possible, we will talk to you and agree to a revised time period.

The person overseeing your complaint will keep you informed of the progress being made. This person will also keep a log of the complaint for future reference.

Stage B

In most cases, we would expect that your complaint is resolved informally. If you feel that your initial complaint has not been dealt with appropriately you should put your complaint in writing, or verbally to the Head of School or Executive Headteacher. A written summary of a verbal complaint will be written; the complainant will read the summary and sign to agree to the notes.

We would expect you to aim to do this within five school days of receiving a response to your complaint as it is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as soon as possible. The form at Appendix A you may find useful. If you are a pupil we will explain the form to you, help you complete it and give you a copy.

If your complaint is about the Executive Headteacher, you should put your complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors, addressed to the school, to ask for your complaint to be investigated.

In all cases, the Head of School or Executive Headteacher can support you to put your complaint in writing if necessary.

If you are involved in any way with a complaint, the Head of School or the Executive Headteacher will explain what will happen and the support that is available to you.

The Head of School or Executive Headteacher will invite you to discuss your complaint at a meeting. Timescales for dealing with your complaint will be agreed with you. We will aim to have a meeting with you and to explain what will happen, **within 10 school days of receiving your letter**. The school's designated person will complete the investigation and will let you know the outcome in **writing within 10 school days of completion**.

Stage C

If you still feel that your complaint has not been dealt with fairly, you should write, through the school's address, to the Chair of Governors setting out your reasons for asking the governing body's complaints committee to consider your complaint. You do not have to write down details of your whole complaint again. If your complaint is about the Chair of Governors, then you should write to the Vice Chair of Governors, setting out your reasons for asking the governing body's complaints committee to consider your complaint.

If you need assistance instead of sending a letter or e-mail, you can talk to the Chair of Governors, or person designated by the school who will write down what is discussed and what, in your own words, would resolve the problem and then be asked to sign them as a true record of what was said. We would normally expect you to do this **within five school days of receiving the school's response**. We will let you know how the complaint will be dealt with and will send a letter to confirm this. **The complaints committee will aim to have a meeting with you within 15 school days of receiving your letter**.

The letter will also tell you when all the documentation to be considered by the complaints committee must be received. Everyone involved will see the documentation before the meeting, while ensuring that people's rights to privacy of information are protected. The letter will also record what we have agreed with you about when and where the meeting will take place and what will happen. The timescale may need to be changed, to allow for the availability of people, the gathering of information or seeking advice. In this case, the person dealing with the complaint will agree to a new meeting date with you.

Normally, in order to deal with the complaint as quickly as possible, the complaints committee will not reschedule the meeting more than once. If you ask to reschedule the meeting more than once, the committee may think it reasonable to decide on the complaint in your absence to avoid unnecessary delays.

We aim to write to you **within 10 school days** of the meeting explaining the outcome of the governing body's complaints committee's consideration.

The governing body's complaints committee is the final arbiter of complaints.

Special circumstances

Where a complaint is made about any of the following the complaints policy will be applied differently.

A governor or group of governors:

- The concern or complaint will be referred to the Chair of Governors for investigation. The Chair may alternatively delegate the matter to another governor for investigation. Stage B onwards of the complaints policy will apply.

The Chair of Governors or Executive Headteacher:

- The Vice Chair of Governors will be informed and will investigate it or may delegate it to another governor. Stage B onwards of the complaints policy will apply.

Both the Chair of Governors and Vice Chair of Governors:

- The complaint will be referred to the clerk to the governing body who will inform the chair of the complaints committee. Stage C of the complaint policy will then apply.

The whole governing body:

- The complaint will be referred to the clerk to the governing body who will inform the Executive Headteacher, Chair of Governors, local authority and, where appropriate, the diocesan authority.
- The authorities will agree arrangements with the governing body for independent investigation and consideration of the complaint.

The Executive Headteacher:

- The concern or complaint will be referred to the Chair of Governors who will undertake the investigation or may delegate it to another governor. Stage B onwards of the complaints policy will apply.

Our commitment to you

In all cases the school and governing body will ensure that complaints are dealt with in an unbiased, open, and fair way.

We will take your complaints seriously and, where we have made mistakes, will try to learn from them.

If you need help to make your complaint known, we will try and assist you. If you are a young person and need extra assistance you may want to contact MEIC which is a national advocacy and advice helpline for children and young people. Advice and support can also be accessed from the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

MEIC may be contacted by freephone: 0808 802 3456, or text: 84001. This service is operated 24 hours a day.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales can be contacted by freephone: 0808 801 1000 (Monday to Friday 9a.m. to 5p.m.), text: 80 800 (start your message with COM) or e-mail: advice@childcomwales.org.uk (<mailto:advice@childcomwales.org.uk>).

For more information refer to our accessibility statement (<https://gov.wales/accessibility-statement-govwales>).