

St Luke's C.E. Primary School Complaints Procedure

Complaints Procedure
Full Governing Body
Reviewed: Summer 2026
For Review: Spring 2029

Introduction

St Luke's endeavours to provide the best education possible for all of its pupils in an open and transparent environment. We welcome any feedback that we receive from parents, pupils and third parties, and we accept that not all of this will be positive.

Parents are encouraged to come to the school to talk about their concerns. The school has an open door policy and staff are available to see parents before and after school and at other times by appointment.

The school aims to keep parents informed when they have made a complaint and adheres to the timescales stated in this procedure. Where concerns are raised the school intends these to be dealt with fairly, openly, promptly and without prejudice.

In order to do so, the governing body of St Luke's has approved the following procedure which explains what you should do if you have any concerns about the school. This procedure is designed to facilitate resolution of parental concerns with minimum of conflict.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to St Luke's about any provision of 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 this complaints procedure.

Safeguarding

This policy does not cover complaints where there is a safeguarding concern. Wherever a concern or complaint indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, action will be taken in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy which is published on the school website and you should use this process

Social Media

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, St Luke's requests the complainants do not discuss complaints publicly via social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp or X (this is not an exhaustive list). Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also. The school does not consider social media as an acceptable medium for providing complaints. Complaints will only be accepted through the process and form outlined in this policy.

Complaints that result in staff capability or disciplinary action

If, at any formal stage of the complaint, it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary in order to resolve the issue, the details of this action will remain confidential to the Headteacher and/or the staff member's line manager. The complainant is entitled to be informed that action is being taken and of the eventual outcome of any such

action, but is not entitled to participate in the proceedings or to receive any detail about them.

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 however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’.

It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. St Luke’s takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you 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.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, St Luke’s will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person or in writing. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the classteacher or Headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

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 Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair/Co-Chairs of Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Co-Chairs of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

A template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure and we would request that all complaints use this form to provide a summary. Further evidence may be included,

but we request that you keep this to a maximum of 4 additional A4 pages (minimum font size 10). If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office for advice. 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.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair/Co-Chairs of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Use of AI with complaints

Complaints that we consider are wholly or substantially generated by artificial intelligence (AI) tools, without meaningful personal input, may not be accepted for formal consideration. Where AI has been used to assist in drafting, the complainant must review, personalise, and take full responsibility for the content. The school reserves the right to request clarification or resubmission of a complaint if there is reasonable evidence that it has been produced using AI in a way that does not reflect the complainant's own words, experiences, or intentions. This is to maintain the integrity, accuracy, and fairness of the complaints process. If a request by the school is made for clarification and/or resubmission of a complaint, the school reserves the right to extend the published timescales it would normally take to resolve a complaint through the complaints procedure. If this situation arises, the complainant will be notified and they will be informed of the revised period of time by which the school will respond to the complaint.

Timescales for making a complaint

You 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 only consider complaints submitted outside this timeframe where we determine that exceptional circumstances apply.

St Luke's will endeavour to abide by timeframes stated under each stage but acknowledges that in some circumstances, this is not always possible due to the complexity of information needed to review a complaint or difficulties regarding individual's availability to deal with the complaint. If it becomes apparent that it is not possible to complete any stage of the complaints procedure within a given timeframe, the individual responsible for handling the complaint will contact the complainant as soon as possible and come to an agreed timeframe that works for all parties involved.

School working days

School working days do not include INSET days. A school working day is considered to end at 5pm. Therefore, any notification received after this time is considered to be received on the following school working day.

Pausing a complaint

Where a complaint is raised but we do not have clarity from the complainant on the issues, we may pause the timescales of the complaints process whilst clarity is sought so that the complaint can be dealt with effectively. If this happens, we will inform the complainant of a proposed new timescale.

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.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, St Luke's will seek to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Deviation from the procedure

There may be occasions when it is necessary or reasonable to deviate from the published complaints procedure. In these cases, the complainant will be kept informed in a timely manner with the reasons for the deviation explained.

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. This must be done in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form).

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (by email) within 10 school days.

Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The

Headteacher will consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's leadership team (the Investigator), but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Headteacher (or 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 Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 20 school days of the date the complaint was acknowledged and any additional / clarifications received.

If the Headteacher 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 St Luke's will take to resolve or address the complaint.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair/Co-Chairs or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair/Co-Chairs and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body or by Southwark Diocese. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

A new stage 1 complaint will not be accepted if it is the same complaint as one previously made, but made against the Headteacher. This will always be a stage 2 complaint about the process or result.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the

governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 5 school days.

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

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting and if the panel will require them to attend. They will aim to convene a meeting within 30 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant is required to attend and rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk 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 complaints committee will consist of at least 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 Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from St Luke's available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

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 10 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, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 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 who were recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the 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 electronic recording of 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 Luke's with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days.

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 St Luke's.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair/Co-Chairs and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

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 St Luke's will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure 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 Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by St Luke's. They will consider whether St Luke's 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, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

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

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a resolution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- provide all supporting evidence to investigators at the earliest opportunity
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to provide a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:

- sensitive and thorough discussion with the complainant to establish their perspective and desired outcomes
- interviewing staff and other people relevant to the complaint
- consideration of records and other relevant information
- analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the Clerk as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

Clerk to the Stage 2 Panel Hearing

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the Panel and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints,

education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings by way of taking notes
- circulate the notes of the Panel hearing
- notify all parties of the Panel's decision.

Panel Chair

The Panel's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, will ensure that the meeting is conducted in line with the complaints procedure and best practice principles.

Panel Members

Panel members should be aware that:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
- No governor may sit on the Panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it
- They should read all documentation and understand the aims and purpose of the meeting.

Managing serial and unreasonable complaints (formal and informal)

The school is committed to working in partnership with parents and to resolving concerns fairly, promptly and respectfully. However, the school also has a duty to ensure that its resources are used effectively and that staff are able to carry out their roles without unreasonable disruption.

The school reserves the right to restrict communication from parents who send excessive volumes of correspondence, or who engage in behaviour that hinders the proper running of the school.

In line with Department for Education guidance, a complaint or pattern of behaviour may be considered unreasonable where a 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 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 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 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 or confidential information on social media or other public forums.

Unreasonable behaviour may occur in a single incident or form part of a pattern of conduct over time.

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

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact St Luke's 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 Luke's.

St Luke's may use their discretion to decide not to investigate a complaint that is deemed to be serial or unreasonable. Where this decision is taken, the Headteacher must inform the Chair/Co-Chairs of Governors, outlining the nature of the complaint and the reasons for not investigating.

If the Chair/Co-Chairs of Governors consider it appropriate, they may direct the Headteacher to investigate the complaint, in which case the full complaints procedure will commence from Stage One.

If the Chair/Co-Chairs uphold the Headteacher's decision not to investigate and the complainant considers this decision to be so unreasonable that no other rational body in the same position would have made it, the complainant may write to the Department for Education.

Summer 2026

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to St Luke's C.E. Primary School who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Please feel free to add up to 4 additional pages (minimum font size 10).

Name	
Name of pupil, year group and your relationship to them (where applicable)	
Contact address	
Contact telephone	
Contact email address	
Summary of the complaint	
Action taken so far (including staff member who has dealt with it so far) or solutions offered	
The reason that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you	
What action would you like to be taken to resolve the problem?	

Signed:

Date: