

**HOLY TRINITY  
CATHOLIC  
SCHOOL**

**COMPLAINTS  
GUIDE FOR  
PARENTS  
2015**



# Holy Trinity Primary School, Chipping Norton

## Complaint form and Parents' Guide

### **Notes**

The form below can be used by any person making a complaint about the operation of the school which is not covered by an alternative specific procedure. Anyone receiving this form should be advised verbally that help in completing it is available from the school. A member of school staff who is familiar with the process should be nominated to give help.

If it is appropriate for a member of staff to look into this complaint, it should be returned to the Headteacher.

If it is appropriate that it should be dealt with by the governing body, it should be returned to the Clerk to the Governors at the school.

Please complete and return to the School Secretary who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

Postcode: .....

Daytime telephone number: .....

Evening telephone number: .....

If applicable, name of child(ren) at school: .....

Please give details of your complaint:

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

Your relationship to the school, e.g. parent, carer, neighbour, member of public:

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

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

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

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**Official Use:**

**Date of acknowledgement sent:** .....

**By Whom:** .....

**Complaint referred to:** .....

**Date:** .....

## **Sharing your concerns about your child's education**

### **A Parents' Guide**

Holy Trinity School, Chipping Norton, recognises that at times things can go wrong. This guidance will help you understand how to resolve concerns you may have about your child's education. The school has procedures for dealing with concerns or complaints and we value any feedback about our services, including compliments and suggestions.

The school's governing body has overall responsibility for the school and for ensuring the well-being of pupils and that all pupils receive an appropriate and high standard of education.

The headteacher is responsible for making decisions on a daily basis about the school's internal management and organisation. So you should contact the school if you are concerned about an issue such as:

- your child's academic progress
- special education needs provision
- your child's welfare
- bullying
- something that has happened in school;

### **How do I complain to the school?**

First, we hope you will speak to the relevant member of staff as soon as you have a concern. This will be the class teacher. This informal approach is nearly always the quickest and most effective way of resolving your concerns.

If you feel that your concern has not been resolved, then it is important to speak to or write to the headteacher who will look into your concern.

If you are unhappy with the headteacher's response you should write with your complaint to the Chair of Governors/Clerk to the Governing Body at the school address. Mark your envelope 'FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION'.

### **This is how your complaint will be handled**

**Within 5 working days** the chair of governors will clarify the nature of your complaint by asking you to complete a complaint form and will offer help in completing the form, if appropriate

**Within 5 working days of receiving the form** the Chair will decide whether mediation should be offered to help you and the headteacher explore possible resolution.

If mediation is agreed, the chair of governors will endeavour to set up the meeting **within 10 working days**. If that timescale is not possible you will be told the reason.

If mediation is not deemed appropriate or if it is not successful, the Chair of Governors or Clerk will set up a panel of governors to meet **within 15 working days** to consider your complaint. The clerk will provide details of the hearing and will request any further information you may wish to provide. The complaints panel will consist of three governors who (as far as possible) will have no prior knowledge of the events being complained of. The panel will be supported by a clerk who will take notes during the hearing and will stay with the panel while they make their decision in case governors need to be reminded about responses to a particular question. The panel will hear the complaint impartially and make their decision without fear or favour.

**Five working days** before the hearing the clerk will send to you, the complainant, the headteacher and the three panel members, copies of all papers submitted by both sides so that there is sufficient time to read the evidence before the hearing.

#### **At the hearing,**

1. You and the headteacher will be invited into the room where the panel is being held at the same time.
2. After introductions, you, the complainant will be invited to explain your complaint,
3. The headteacher may question you
4. The panel will question you
5. The headteacher will be invited to explain the school's actions
6. You, the complainant may question the headteacher
7. The panel will question the headteacher
8. The panel may ask questions at any point.
9. You, the complainant will then be invited to sum up your complaint.
10. The headteacher will then be invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
11. The chair will explain that you and the headteacher will hear from the panel **within five working days**.
12. Both you and the headteacher will leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
13. The clerk will remain with the panel.

#### **Can I take my complaint further?**

For most complaints, you **cannot** take your complaint to the local authority. The local authority cannot investigate school matters on a parent's behalf nor can it review how the school has dealt with your complaint.

However, if you feel that the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures, you can write to the Secretary of State for Education <http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus/df>

## **Mediation**

### **The benefits of mediation**

Mediation can be a good way to resolve a complaint because:

- It gives both complainant and headteacher another opportunity to hear each other's points of view (with a third party facilitating)
- It gives the third party an opportunity to help headteacher and complainant explore and build on areas of agreement
- It gives headteacher and complainant a structure within which they can resolve remaining differences.
- If both complainant and headteacher emerge from the mediation satisfied, that is the best foundation for a continuing positive relationship between them.
- Even if the complaint continues to a governors' panel, the issues to be considered should be much clearer.
- Mediation may elicit one or more of the responses listed below from either party:
  - an acknowledgment that the complaint is valid in whole or in part.
  - an apology;
  - an explanation;
  - an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
  - an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
  - an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
  - an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.
- Recourse to mediation must be with the agreement of both parties and is intended to help arrive at a mutually agreeable solution – it is not possible to impose this on either party. Nor does it prevent a complainant having recourse to formal appeals procedures as detailed in paragraphs 6, 7 and 8.

### **In-house mediation**

Many chairs of governors and other governors already have the skills – or can acquire the skills – to conduct a mediation process between their headteacher and a complainant. The skills and attributes include:

- ability to listen impartially to both sides
- ability to control a dialogue so that both sides listen to each other
- ability to summarise the arguments and focus the dialogue
- ability to identify areas of agreement that might form a basis for resolving one or more of the issues relating to the complaint
- understanding that solutions cannot be imposed and that both parties need to be satisfied with whatever is resolved.
- understanding that mediation does not always work and there is a further step available to complainants.

Governor Services will offer training in mediation skills to give governors confidence that they can conduct a mediation process.

**If the governing body requires outside help**

Governor Services offers a mediation service where a trained clerk, governor or adviser acts as mediator.

The mediation 'package' consists of the following elements:

- familiarisation with the background and nature of the complaint (including the reading of supporting documentation and interviews with the complainant, staff and governors as appropriate. These may be 'face to face' or by telephone);
- a mediation meeting between the complainant and a representative of the school;
- a written summary of the mediation meeting including, where appropriate, recommendations in relation to school policies, procedures and actions.

Mediation will be undertaken by a trained clerk, governor or adviser not directly linked to the school in order to ensure complete impartiality.