

St Andrew's School Concerns and Complaints Policy

All establishments serving the public sometimes get things wrong. This may be a matter of perception, subjection or reality. Given the nature of the 'human condition' mistakes can and do happen. Clearly, at St Andrew's School we are committed to delivering a quality service to all our users. We aim to take effective action to ensure standards are upheld and welcome being informed where they have not been satisfactory. We always try to resolve any concerns at the time, usually face to face, by phone or email.

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 generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures. St Andrew's school takes informal concerns seriously and makes every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

There are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. In those cases, the school's formal procedure should be invoked through the stages outlined within the procedure below.

Who can make a complaint?

Any person, including members of the general public may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions). St Andrew' School does not limit complaints to parents or carers of children that are at the school.

This policy statement sets out a procedure for parents and carers to complain about any aspect of the service. Complaints should be made constructively and every effort will be made to resolve them at an early stage. It is in the best interests of parents, carers, children and staff that complaints are dealt with fairly and confidentially.

Aberdeenshire Council Complaints procedure and how it dovetails with St Andrew's School procedures

Stage 1 – Frontline Resolution (at School)

At St Andrew's School we shall respond to the comments or concerns of all parties as promptly and positively as possible.

In the first instance the parent or carer should contact the classroom teacher for informal feedback. This may be all that is required to resolve the problem. The Classroom teacher will record the concern in the written chronology and keep the records of the concern and also of the proposed solution. It really is the ethos of St Andrew's that we work together as a team with families to Get it Right for every Child.

If the problem remains unresolved, the complainant should contact the Head Teacher, Mrs Drummond, either by letter, telephone or in person. The Head Teacher is not always immediately available but will be quick to get back to you with an appointment time.

The Head Teacher will listen to the concern and investigate the circumstances surrounding it. The Head Teacher will discuss the outcome of the complaint with the complainant within two weeks of the complaint being made. This will preferably be face to face but may be by letter or email should the complainant require this. The Head Teacher will record details of the complaint and resolution using 'Pastoral Notes' which is a databased used by all Aberdeenshire Schools.

The Head Teacher will then report back to the parent or carer with a resolution which should solve the issue.

If the concern cannot be resolved at school level, the parent or carer may contact the Quality Improvement Officer, currently Mr A Ritchie at Aberdeenshire Council.

Stage 2 - Investigation

Where you are not happy with the outcome at school level you can contact the feedback team:

Contact feedback team

Feedback Team
Woodhill House
Westburn Road
Aberdeen
AB16 5GB

Telephone: [01346 585 863](tel:01346585863)

Email: feedback.team@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

They will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at stage 1. They will also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation.

They will acknowledge your complaint within three working days and we will give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than 20 working days unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.

What if you are still dissatisfied?

If, after receiving Aberdeenshire Council's final decision on your complaint, you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to consider it. We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.

The SPSO cannot normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (make sure it has done so before contacting them)
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court

Vexatious Complaints

St Andrew's School and the Head Teacher will always do the very best they can to deal with complaints. This will include the Head Teacher being available during holiday times as this is often when frustrations come to the surface.

However, in cases where the school is contacted repeatedly by an individual making the same points, or who asks them to reconsider their position then St Andrew's School will act appropriately whilst being disappointed should this occasion arise. In such instances, it may be necessary for the school to cease responding to the complainant and to refer them directly to the Aberdeenshire Council Feedback Team. This would only ever be the case if:

1. The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs;
2. The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any); and
3. They are contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time.

This is much more likely to happen if:

1. The school has reason to believe that the individual is contacting them with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience
2. The complainant's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive
3. They make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff