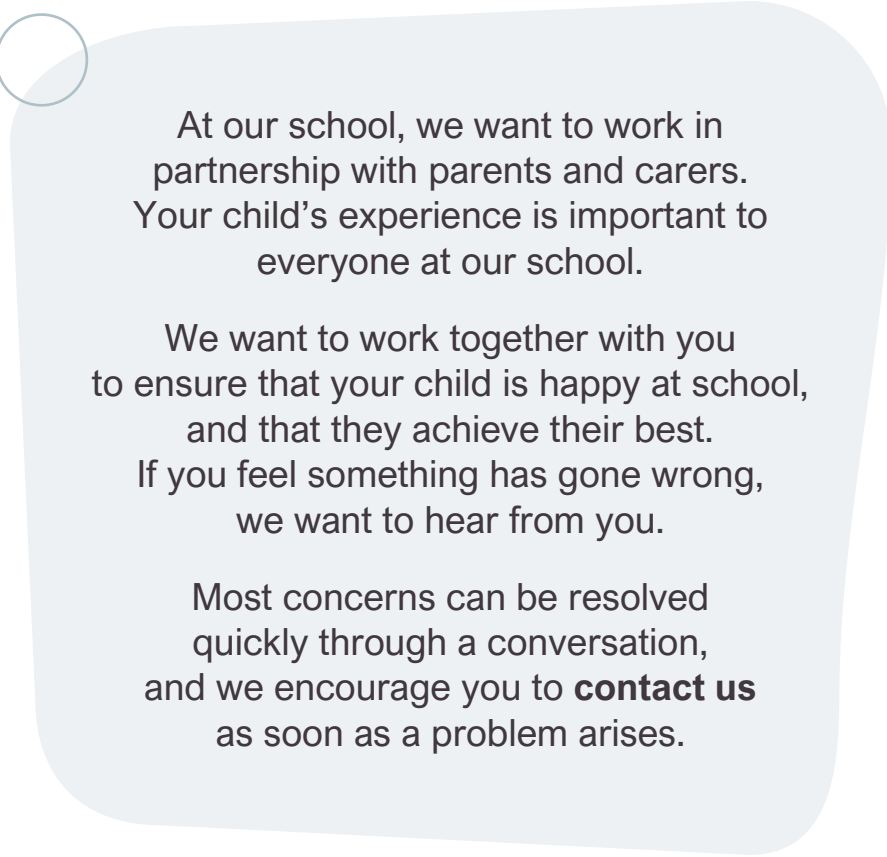


School concerns & complaints

A guide for parents and carers





At our school, we want to work in partnership with parents and carers. Your child's experience is important to everyone at our school.

We want to work together with you to ensure that your child is happy at school, and that they achieve their best. If you feel something has gone wrong, we want to hear from you.

Most concerns can be resolved quickly through a conversation, and we encourage you to **contact us** as soon as a problem arises.

Step 1: Talk to us (Stage 1)

If you have a concern, please raise it with the person who is best placed to help, for example:

- ▶ Your child's class teacher
- ▶ Form Tutor
- ▶ Head of Year
- ▶ A member of the school office

We will do our best to listen, understand your concerns and work with you to find a solution.

Most concerns are resolved informally at this stage.

Step 2: Make a formal complaint (Stage 2)

If your concern has not been resolved within **15 school days**, or the matter is serious, you can make a formal complaint in writing. Please contact the school's Complaints Coordinator **Carol Low Clow@stmarks.anthemtrust.uk** to raise your complaint and not multiple people in the school or at Anthem, as this may lead to an uncoordinated and duplicated response.

Please include:

- ▶ What happened
- ▶ Relevant dates
- ▶ Who was involved
- ▶ What outcome you are seeking

The school will acknowledge your complaint within **five school days**. If your letter/email is unclear to us, we may request a meeting or call first to ensure we have understood your concern before responding in writing. We will tell you if we need any more information.

After considering your complaint, the Headteacher will then send you a formal written response, setting out any actions we have taken or plan to take, usually within **20 school days** the latest.

Step 3: Request a review (Stage 3)

If you remain unhappy with the outcome of the formal complaint (Stage 2), you may request a review by a member of the Anthem National Team or designate by contacting the school's Complaints Coordinator.

Requests for a Stage 3 review must be submitted within **five school days** of receiving the Stage 2 outcome.

The school will acknowledge your request to escalate within **five school days**, and the Stage 3 reviewer will provide a response within **20 school days** the latest.

Step 4: Complaints Panel (Stage 4)

If you are still dissatisfied after Stage 3, you may ask for your complaint to be considered by an independent Complaints Panel.

Requests for a Stage 4 Panel Hearing must be submitted within **five school days** of receiving the Stage 3 outcome.

The panel will include at least three people not directly involved in the complaint, including one person who is independent of the management and running of the school.

You don't have to attend but if you want to, we will do our best to agree a time and date with you for the meeting, usually within **20 school days** of receipt of your request. The meeting will normally be held online.

After the hearing, the Chair of the panel will send their outcome and any recommendations, if applicable, within **10 school days**. The Headteacher and the trust will also get a copy.

Other important information

Who can raise concerns

The school's Concerns and Complaints Policy only applies to parents/carers of students currently attending the school. If you are not a parent/carer at the school you can still get in touch, but we may consider your concerns outside of the policy.

The type of concerns we can consider

This policy is for general concerns about how our school is run. Some areas have particular processes required by law or regulations. This includes admissions, exclusions and suspensions, safeguarding concerns, staff grievances, disciplinary matters, whistleblowing, and data protection. If your concern would be better handled through one of these processes, we will let you know and explain the alternative process to you.

If you are unsure whether this procedure applies, please contact the school's Complaints Coordinator and we will advise you.

Timescales

- ▶ Concerns and complaints should normally be raised within **3 months** of the issue occurring.
- ▶ School holidays and INSET days are not counted as school days.
- ▶ If exceptional circumstances arise, timescales may be extended.

Using AI

Some people like to use AI tools to help organise their thoughts. We recommend against using public AI tools because they can store and republish personal information, such as sensitive details about your child. To ensure complaints are understood clearly and handled fairly, parents/carers are expected to submit complaints in their own words and should reflect their personal experience and views.

The use of AI-generated content is discouraged, as it may distort the facts, include inappropriate language, or misrepresent the complainant's views. AI does not always get it right when citing laws and can make a complaint more complex than necessary. If a complaint is suspected to have been drafted using AI, the school reserves the right to seek clarification or ask for the complaint to be resubmitted.

Help from other organisations

We understand you might want to raise concerns with other organisations that oversee the work we do, such as the DfE or Ofsted. It is best to talk to us first and go through the steps in this guide because it helps us put things right more quickly and avoids duplicating work for you and for us. In most cases external organisations will expect you to have completed our complaints procedure before getting involved.

Help with special educational needs

We work together with the local authority to provide support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). We will always try to help, but for some things that are outside of our control we will refer you to the local authority.

What we are responsible for: We provide teaching, with reasonable adjustments to help your child, and support from our own resources (known as SEN support). We monitor your child's progress, put support plans in place, and review these with you.

What the local authority is responsible for: The local authority decides whether to assess a child for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), issues and maintains the EHCP, and provides the funding and services specified within it.

What an EHCP sets out: An EHCP describes your child's needs, the provision required to meet those needs, and who must deliver it. Schools must implement the parts of the plan that fall within their control, and the local authority must provide the provision it is responsible for.

Some support depends on national or local funding decisions that are outside our control. We will always do our best within the resources available to us. If you are unsure about who is responsible for a particular aspect of SEND support, please ask.

The school's Concerns and Complaints policy meets the requirements of Part 7 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and follows the DfE's expectations for school trusts to have a clear and accessible way for parents/carers to raise concerns.

What we ask of parents and carers

We ask everyone involved in a complaint to:

- ▶ Treat staff and others with courtesy and respect.
- ▶ Communicate calmly and constructively.
- ▶ Provide information honestly and accurately.
- ▶ Allow reasonable time for investigations to take place.
- ▶ Avoid discussing ongoing complaints on social media.

Need help?

If you need support accessing the complaints procedure, require reasonable adjustments, or would like advice on who to contact, please speak to the school office or the school's Complaints Coordinator.

Our commitment

We are committed to listening to concerns, investigating complaints fairly and impartially, and learning from feedback so that we can continue to improve the experience of all students and families.

Full policy

A copy of the full school's Concerns and Complaints Policy is available on the school website and via this link:

<https://www.anthemtrust.uk/policies>