



SHUSTOKE C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

Complaints Policy and Procedures 2023-24

A Guide for Staff, Parents and the wider Community

This policy should be used in conjunction with the DfE Guidance.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints about your school are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, the school must be clear about the procedures they will apply when they receive a complaint.

Our School Vision

At Shustoke C of E Primary School we aim to begin with the child, encouraging and supporting each individual to become a positive member of the community through childhood and into adult life. We seek to ensure all children enjoy their school experience, developing their confidence, self esteem, gifts and talents through a stimulating curriculum in which they initiate learning as active partners, and rise to challenges giving of their best.

We endeavour to prepare the children for the next stage in their education and to make a positive contribution to our rapidly changing world. We believe that all children have the potential to learn, develop academically, socially, morally, spiritually and culturally caring about others and the world in which we live. We work in partnership and welcome all parents, governors, the church and the community in the life of the school, providing education of the highest quality within the context of the Christian belief and practice.

Our Core Values

At Shustoke School we believe that all children should display the following core values:

- Respect
- Courtesy
- Honesty
- Caring
- Equality
- Forgiveness

School aims

By fulfilling the following aims we want all our children to be happy, successful, caring and confident:

- to provide a stimulating learning environment which considers all aspects of a child's development
- to encourage every child to develop as an independent, self-motivated learner
- to recognise and celebrate achievement in all aspects of life
- to value each individual's contribution within a climate of mutual care, trust, respect and honesty



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- encourage parents to be fully involved in their children's learning
- to enable each child to feel pride and self-worth in contributing to the school's place in the school community, local community, national community and global community
- to actively involve the church in the life of the school
- to actively involve the wider community in the life of the school and promote community cohesion.

Curriculum aims

The staff and governors believe that the school curriculum should:

- be appropriate to the needs, abilities and aptitudes of individual pupils
- promote intellectual, moral, social, creative, cultural, spiritual, emotional and physical development of pupils
- seek to develop the knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes of pupils in ways which are relevant to the needs of individual pupils and wider community in which they live
- reflect the multicultural and multi-faith nature of society
- presume that all pupils may at some time have special educational and emotional needs requiring particular provision
- seek to ensure equality of opportunity and the recognition that people are entitled to equal opportunities and challenge discrimination .

Introduction:

The majority of issues raised by parents, the community or pupils, are **concerns** rather than **complaints**. Shustoke CE Primary School is committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures.

- A **concern** is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.
- A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or lack of action.

However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure. For the school to be able to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made within three months of the incident or series of incidents occurring. If a complaint is older than 3 months it will not be investigated unless in exceptional circumstances.

The prime aim of Shustoke CE Primary School's policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the school.

The Headteacher, staff and governors of your child's school want to work with you to establish a good parent / school relationship. They will inform you about the school's policies and your child's progress. However, there may be times when you, as a parent, carer or guardian, will have comments, suggestions or complaints to make.



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Your query may concern the curriculum for which the governors have important responsibilities. On the other hand it may involve things for which the Local Authority is responsible. You may just have a concern about a particular incident which you understand has happened at the school.

Whatever the issue, the important thing is to talk to someone at the school as soon as you can. It may be all that you need to do to solve the problem. If you are still unhappy after that, this document tells you how you can take the matter further. It tells you what will happen and whom to contact.

Problems are more easily resolved if they are raised as soon as possible after something has happened. The formal procedure only covers complaints about incidents which have happened in the previous three months. This may not apply if there are obvious reasons why the incident could not have been taken up earlier.

There are some complaints that cannot be followed up through these procedures. Separate procedures exist for complaints, for instance, on staff conduct, admission to or exclusion from school, statements of special educational need, and on religious education and collective worship. If you take your concern informally to the school first, the Headteacher can advise you if it is a matter which will be dealt with in a different way.

The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

The Shustoke CE Primary School Policy has been written in conjunction with the Local Authority and DFE Guidance.

Informal Stage:

1. A concern is raised informally with a staff member. Concerns will often be resolved at this stage. As we are a primary school, the first point of contact for a concern or complaint would be your *class teacher* because your child's class teacher will usually be the person with whom your child has the most contact in school. This could be an informal conversation with the class teacher after which, hopefully the concern will be resolved, or for a more serious concern, parents/carers or guardians may make an appointment with the class teacher where an extended period of time can be given to resolve the issue. In some cases this may result in a follow up appointment or a series of follow up appointments to ensure that the matter is resolved fully.
2. The concern is raised with a senior member of staff. At Shustoke C of E Primary School, the senior members of staff responsible for children in different stages of the school are :
 - *Mrs. Davison, Assistant Headteacher (primarily responsible for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2).*
 - *Mrs. Preece, Deputy Headteacher (primarily responsible for children in Year 3, 4, 5, and 6).*
 - *Miss Wall, Headteacher (whole school responsibility).*

They will either respond immediately or as soon as they have the necessary information. You will be given a date by which they will get back to you. Most concerns and complaints will have been resolved by this stage. If you are still unhappy the next step is to make a formal complaint to the governing body.



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Formal Process

1. Discussion with the Headteacher, by appointment (preferably).

Complainants should be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence. Equally, an effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Only where all these avenues have been tried and found unsatisfactory should the complainant take a complaint to the Chair of Governors or Clerk to the Governing Body. Principles informing our complaints procedure

2. **The Governing Body.** If you contact a member of the school's governing body they will ask you to contact the Headteacher or the appropriate senior member of staff. This is to help you start at the right place and leave the governors free to possibly be involved at a later stage. You should send your complaint to the Chair of Governors at your child's school. At Shustoke C of E Primary School, the current Chair of Governors is Mrs. Carole Byng, c/o the school office. You may wish to keep a photocopy to use later. The Chair of Governors or a nominated Governor will review the complaint to be certain that the matter has been dealt with at an earlier stage.

Where informal attempts have been unsuccessful in resolving a complaint, the complainant should write to Carole Byng the **Chair of Governors** or Louise Baudet **Clerk to the Governing Body** at the school address. The envelope should be marked 'FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION' 'PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL' and staff in the school office must ensure that the letter is forwarded without delay.

The complainant will be asked to complete a complaint form if they have not already done so. The Chair of Governors or Clerk will offer to help an individual to complete the form if appropriate.

On receipt of the complaint form, the Chair of Governors (or other governor) will:

- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

At this point the chair of governors will decide whether the complaint should go straight to the **governors' complaints panel**. The complaints panel will consist of at least 3 Governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting they will elect a chairperson.

Remit of the panel: the complaints panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;



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- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure problems of a similar nature do not recur.

It may:

- Consider and, if appropriate, criticise the way in which an operational decision was communicated – **but cannot overturn the decision itself**
- Consider the thoroughness with which the Headteacher investigated a complaint about a member of staff – **but cannot expect the Headteacher to provide details about confidential discussions with that staff member.**
- Consider the manner in which a complaint about any decision was addressed ask for the decision to be reviewed – **but cannot expect the Headteacher to have changed the decision**
- Consider and, if appropriate, identify limitations in a policy or procedures –**but cannot make changes to the policy.** (It can, however, recommend that the policy be reviewed by the governing body to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur, and individual panel members can subsequently play their part in improving the policy)
- Consider whether it should recommend that the governing body offer appropriate redress

Can parents take their complaint further?

Parents cannot take their appeal further than the governing body. The Local Authority cannot investigate school matters on a parent's behalf nor can it review how the school has dealt with a complaint. If a parent feels that the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures, they can write to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Department for Education and Skills, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1 P 3BT.

Vexatious Complainants

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complaint becomes vexatious (e.g. the complainant tries to re-open the same issue), the Chair of the Governing Body can inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. Schools will take legal advice on this stage.

Using the Complaints Procedure

The resolution of a complaint can be an opportunity for the school to improve its practice and develop further a strong partnership with parents.



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School Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the school office in an envelope addressed to the Chair of Governors or Clerk to Governors and mark it Private and Confidential, for immediate action. The Chair of Governors will then 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:

Your relationship to the child(ren) at school:

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

Please give details of your complaint:



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

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

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

Signature

Date.....