

Shorne Church of England Primary School

(A member of the Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust)



Complaints Policy

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Lead Governor: Keith Syrett (Chair of Governors)

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This is an Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust Policy which applies to all the schools within the Trust, including Shorne Church of England Primary School

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1. Introduction

Shorne Church of England Primary School is part of the Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust, a Church of England Multi-Academy Trust in the Diocese of Rochester. The Trust aims to provide a high quality educational experience for every student, which not only provides good teaching, leading to good examination results, but also a rounded academy experience with particular emphasis on personal development, all undertaken within a Christian setting and inspired by Christian belief and values. We also recognise that, despite a strong record of success in most areas of the academy's life and mission, occasionally things can go wrong and parents or members of the public may need to make a complaint or raise concerns.

All complaints received will be recorded formally by the academy in a central log. It should be noted that academy does not normally consider complaints made more than one year after the incident or situation. If a complaint is made about an issue that is over a year old the academy will write to the complainant explaining.

2. Complaints from people who are not parents of students at the academy (members of the public)

The Head of school will respond to complaints from members of the public within 8 working days of receipt. These complaints should be addressed in writing to the Headteacher. If the complainant is not satisfied by the response, which may be in writing directly, or may involve a meeting with the complainant before a written response, the complainant may refer it to the Chair of Governors of the Local Governing Body (LGB) as set out below.

3. Complaints from parents

3.1 Informal stage

Most complaints or issues can be resolved informally and quickly by discussion with a Community Leader (or equivalent post at Primary e.g. Teacher or SENCO), Deputy or Assistant Head of school or the Head of school. Alternatively parents can write to the senior member of staff or the Head of school outlining the issue clearly.

Any complaint or issue that is put in writing should be written clearly outlining all the issues and what it is hoped that the preferred outcome should be. All complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days.

Parents should make an appointment to discuss their concerns with the member of staff who knows about the issue or incident. If the complaint relates to a student, this would normally be the designated Community Leader, who is the principal channel of communication between the academy and parents. If the complaint relates to the Community Leader, the complaint should be addressed to the Deputy Head of school with responsibility for student services, or in more serious cases, directly to the Headteacher. In some cases it may be appropriate to address an informal complaint to the Assistant or Deputy Head of school with responsibility for that area (for example, academy transport, or options). The areas of responsibility of those senior staff are obtainable from the academy. If in doubt, the Head of school is always able to direct an informal complaint to the most appropriate recipient.

If parents want to have a meeting with the Community Leader (or other recipient of the complaint) they should ask for that in their complaint. When the meeting takes place, the member of staff will usually write notes during the meeting. Parents can ask for a copy of these notes. If the complaint involves the actions or decisions of another member of staff, it is not usually appropriate to have that person present at the initial meeting. It is for the Community Leader, or other senior manager, to address the issue with the member of staff about whom the complaint may be being made.

3.2 Formal stage

Formal Stage 1 – Head of school

If a parent is still dissatisfied after the informal stage they can refer the matter to the Head of school. This can be done in writing, as this will often make the situation clear to all involved parties.

The Head of school may consider that the complaint can be addressed in writing, or may contact the complainant by telephone to ascertain more details. Often, s/he will offer a meeting with the parent or other complainant at a mutually convenient time. At the meeting, and through discussion, the Head of school will clarify what the issues are. What the parent hopes to achieve will also be discussed. Together all parties will agree an acceptable outcome, if possible. This should be to the satisfaction of all parties involved. These should be written down and agreed by all parties so there is no misunderstanding. This will normally be done in the form of a letter to the complainants following the meeting or other conversations.

If the issue is complex the Head of school may need to speak to other staff and students to investigate the concerns. This should happen within 10 academy days. If this timescale cannot be met the Head of school should inform the parent that this will take longer, explain the reasons for this and give a timescale for when the investigation will be completed.

Formal Stage 2 – Chair of the Academy Local Governing Body

After speaking or meeting with the Head of school, if the complaint is still not resolved to the parent's satisfaction, the complaint can be referred to the Chair of Governors. This can either be in writing to the chair at the academy address, for the attention of the Clerk to the Local Governing Body, or alternatively the academy can ask the Chair of Governors to contact the parent directly. The Head of school can also refer the complaint to the Chair of Governors.

If the Head of school is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight to the Chair of Governors and miss out Stage 1. The Chair of Governors may ask for the complaint to be put in writing (if this has not already happened).

The Chair of governors will offer to meet with the parent or other complainant, at a mutually convenient time, if it is felt more information is required, or if the parent asks for a meeting.

The Chair of Governors has 15 days to investigate the complaint. If it cannot be resolved within this time, the chair will inform the complainant and explain why it is taking longer. Reasons for this may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays. The Chair of Governors should, however, give a realistic timescale for when the complaint should be resolved. The chair should inform the complainant of when it is expected that the investigation should be completed.

Formal Stage 3 – Trust Board

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent's satisfaction, or the Chair of Governors feels that it is necessary, he can refer the complaint to the Trust Board for them to consider the complaint. If the Chair of Governors can resolve the complaint, there is no need to make this referral. Referral to the Trust Board is the last resort in otherwise completely intractable situations.

The Chair of the Trust Board can appoint an investigating officer to gather evidence and conduct preliminary interviews on the Board's behalf. The investigating officer will provide a detailed report of his/her investigation of the complaint, and the complainant should be given a copy of this report. It is important that the investigating officer is seen as impartial. So, whilst the investigating officer may be another governor, s/he cannot be a member of the Trust Board.

The committee of the Trust Board considering the complaint should meet at a time convenient to all parties. The complainant, the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors and any member of staff the complaint is about will be invited to the meeting. Any person invited can bring a friend or supporter if they wish. The committee of the Trust Board will consider any written material, and also give the person making the complaint and the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and staff an opportunity to state their case and to question others present. The committee of the Trust Board will ensure that all present are treated fairly. The meeting will be minuted by the Clerk and everyone present will be given a copy of the minutes.

The committee of the Trust Board will give its decision, in writing, within five academy days after the meeting, along with the reasons for their decision.

If after this academy-based process the complaint is still not resolved to the parent's satisfaction, they should write to the Secretary of State.

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