

Complaints Policy 2025

Upton upon Severn CofE Primary and Pre-School



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Our Vision

We believe that the true value in life is to live with courage and hope because, as children of God, if we persevere “Anything is possible we can all succeed”. A school community united in trust and rooted in respect, being responsible for providing inspiration for aspiration.

I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me - Philippians 4:13

1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants’ desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We urge parents and carers to contact us at their earliest convenience if they are unhappy with any aspect of their child’s schooling. We much prefer to know people’s concerns, find solutions together, and build relationships that will serve a child throughout their education with us. For this reason, the informal raising of concerns can often be the best way to first alert us to a problem.

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed. The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

2. Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Upton upon Severn CofE Primary and Pre-School about any provision of facilities or services that we

provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

3. The difference between a concern and a complaint

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 defined as *‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’*.

It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints policy. Upton upon Severn CofE Primary and Pre-School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

4. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

An initial concern or complaint (informal stage) can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with the class teacher, subject leader, SENDCo, deputy headteacher or alternatively with the headteacher if more appropriate.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint, where we will require a complaint form to be completed.

Complainants **must not** approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may also prevent the governor/ governors from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the policy.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as ‘Private and Confidential’.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, c/o the Clerk to Governors via the school office. Please mark them as ‘Private and Confidential’.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing board should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Board c/o the school office. Please mark them as 'Private and Confidential'.

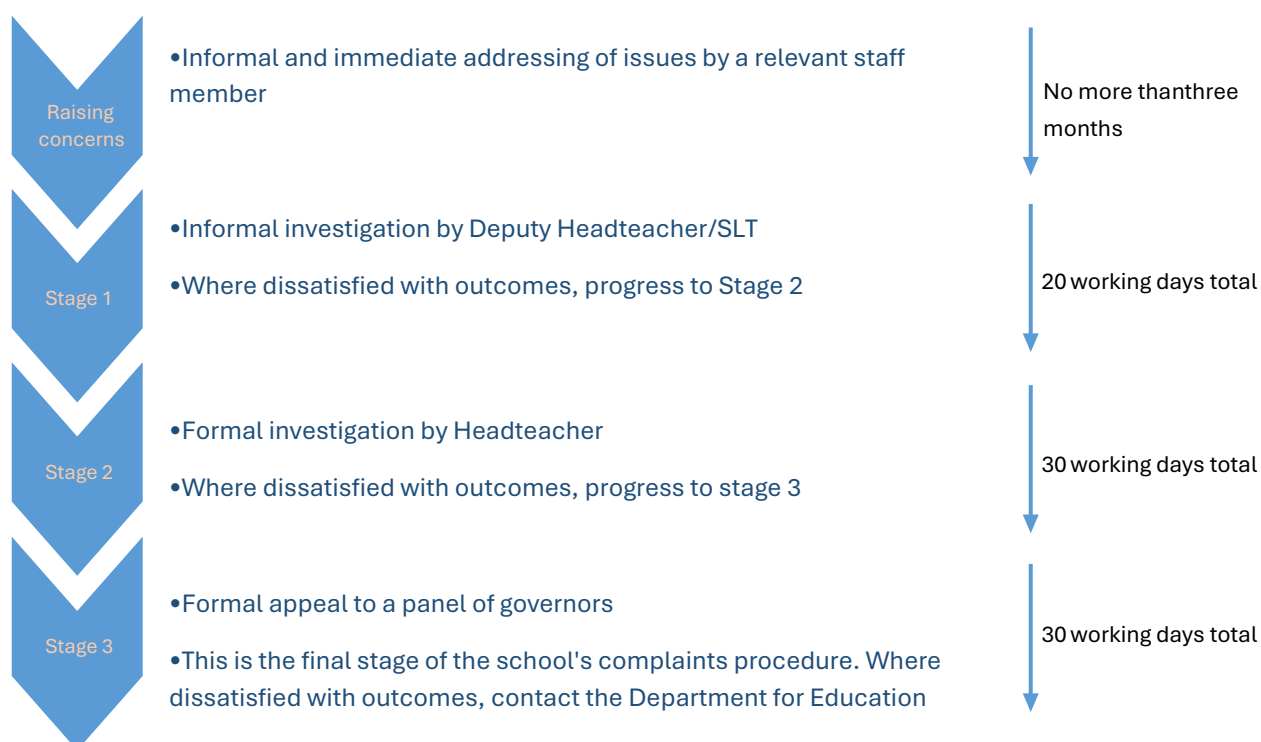
A complaint form is included at the end of this policy and should be completed when submitting your complaint to help identify the specific points you want investigated. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the Clerk to Governors c/o the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

5. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

6. Time scales



Upton upon Severn CofE Primary and Pre-School will endeavour to abide by timeframes stated under each stage but acknowledges that in some circumstances, this is not always possible due to the complexity of information needed to review a complaint or difficulties regarding

individual's availability to deal with the complaint, for example. If it becomes apparent that it is not possible to complete any stage of the complaints procedure within a given timeframe, the individual responsible for handling the complaint will contact the complainant as soon as possible and come to an agreed timeframe that works for all parties involved.

Upton upon Severn CofE Primary and Pre-School reserves the right not to investigate complaints that have been made three months after the subject of the complaint took place, except in exceptional circumstances. What is meant by exceptional circumstances is where new evidence has come to light, where the complaint is of an especially serious matter or where there is reasonable justification for why the complainant has been unable to raise the complaint before this time. The headteacher will review the situation and decide whether or not to enact the complaints procedure, informing the chair of governors of the decision.

6.1 Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

7. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Upton upon Severn CofE Primary and Pre-School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Worcestershire County Council
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions .

	<i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i>
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against Upton upon Severn CofE Primary and Pre-School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

8. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Upton upon Severn CofE Primary and Pre-School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology

9. Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

10. Complaint Stage Process

Our Procedures:

Steps	Who to Contact
1	• Class Teacher for pastoral, behaviour or subject specific issues • SENDCo for SEND issues • Subject Leads for subject specific concerns
2	• Deputy Headteacher/SLT if the concern hasn't been resolved – this now becomes informal complaint Stage 1
3	• Headteacher – this now becomes a formal complaint Stage 2
4	• Governing Body of the school – formal complaint Stage 3

10.1 *Informal Complaint Stage 1*

Whereas a result of raising a concern the complainant still feels that the issue has not been addressed, or where the outcome has been that the complaint needs further investigation than can be resolved briefly, they may progress by making an informal complaint. In doing so, the following steps will be followed:

1. Complainant contacts the Deputy Headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
2. The complainant must explain in writing
 - an overview of the complaint so far
 - who has been involved
 - why the complaint remains unresolved
 - action they would like to be taken to put things right
3. The staff member will respond within 5 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of having received the written complaint. They will explain what action they intend to take.
4. Where the complaint is about a member of staff or a School Governor, the staff member will arrange an informal mediation meeting between the two parties to see if a resolution can be come to.
5. The staff member will provide a written confirmation of the outcome of their investigation within 15 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of having sent confirmation of the intended action. Where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they are able to progress to stage 2 of the complaints process, and launch a formal written complaint.
6. The staff member will make a record of the concern and the outcomes of the discussion which will be held centrally for twelve months, in line with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998.

10.2 *Formal Complaint Stage 2*

1. The complainant may submit a formal complaints form to the Headteacher.
 2. The Headteacher will respond in writing within 10 working days (excluding those that fall in the school holidays) of the date of receipt of the complaint to acknowledge receipt of the complaint and explain what action will be taken, giving clear timeframes.
 3. A log of all correspondence in relation to the complaint will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Principles.
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1. The Headteacher will consider all relevant evidence; this may include but is not limited to:
 - a statement from the complainant,
 - where relevant a statement from an individual who is the subject of the complaint
 - any previous correspondence regarding the complaint
 - any supporting documents in either case
 - interview with anyone related to the complaint
 4. The Headteacher member may decide to have a meeting with the complainant (and where relevant, the subject of the complaint) if they feel that it would be appropriate for the investigation.

5. After considering the available evidence, the Headteacher can:
 - Uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it
 - Reject the complaint and provide the complainant with details of the stage three appeals process
6. Uphold the complaint in part: in other words, the Headteacher may find one aspect of the complaint to be valid, but not another aspect. They may direct for certain action to be taken to resolve the aspect that they find in favour of the complainant.
7. The Headteacher must inform the complainant of their decision in writing within 20 working days (excluding those that fall in the school holidays) of having issued written acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint. They must explain clearly why they have come to the decision that they made. They must detail any agreed actions as a result of the complaint. Finally, they must provide the complainant with details of how to progress the complaint to stage three if they are not satisfied, providing them with the contact details of the clerk to the governors (see the end of the procedure for these).

10.3 *Formal Complaint Stage 3*

If the complainant wishes to appeal a decision by the Headteacher at stage 2 of the procedure, or they are not satisfied with the action that the Headteacher took in relation to the complaint, the complainant is able to appeal this decision.

They must write to the clerk (see the contact details at the end of the procedure) as soon as possible after receiving notice of the Headteacher's decision, briefly outlining the content of the complaint and requesting that a complaints appeal panel is convened.

The clerk will fulfil the role of organising the time and date of the appeal hearing, inviting all the attendees, collating all the relevant documentation and distributing this 5 days in advance of the meeting, recording the proceedings in the form of minutes, and circulating these and the outcome of the meeting.

The complainant must request an appeal panel within 4 weeks of receiving the Headteacher's decision or it will not be considered, except for in exceptional circumstances. On receipt of this written notification, the following steps will be followed:

1. The clerk will write to the complainant within five working days (not including the school holidays) to confirm receipt of the appeal request and detail further action to be taken.
2. The clerk will convene a panel of two school governors, and one independent member with no connection to the school (i.e. they will not be part of the governance or management of the school, will not be a staff member, parent or pupil). All three panel members will have no prior knowledge of the content of the complaint.
3. The appeal hearing will take place within 20 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of receipt of the date of the confirmation letter from the clerk to the complainant, confirming the appeal.
4. In addition to the panel, the following parties will be invited, where applicable:
 - the complainant

- the member of staff who dealt with the complaint at Stage 2
- where the complaint regards a member of staff, the staff member who is the subject of the complaint

The complainant is also able to bring a companion with them to the hearing if they wish. Where the subject of the complaint is a member of staff, that staff member is also able to bring a companion with them.

The companion will be a friend or a colleague. Neither party is able to bring legal representation with them. If after the hearing any party feels that legal action is necessary, please see the contact details at the end of the procedure.

5. If the attendance of any pupils is required at the hearing, parental permission will be sought if they are under the age of 18. Extra care will be taken to consider the vulnerability of children where they are present at a complaints hearing.
6. Where the complaint is about a governor/trustee, the complainant may request that the appeal is heard by an entirely independent panel. It is at the discretion of the Governing Body who will notify the clerk of their decision. Where an entirely independent panel is required, timescales may be affected while the school source appropriate individuals for the review.
7. The panel can make the following decisions:
 - Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
 - 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 that problems of a similar nature do not recur
8. All parties who attended the meeting will be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal within 5 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays).

This is the final stage at which the school will consider the complaint. If the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the complaint further, please see the contact details at the end of the document. The school will not consider the complaint beyond this.

11. Complaints not covered by this procedure

There are a variety of areas where the complaints procedure does not apply because of other separate statutory procedures being in place. The school will deal with complaints regarding these topics in line with the procedures outlines below.

The following complaints should be directed to the LA:

- Statutory assessments of SEND
- School reorganisation proposals
- Admissions to schools

Complaints about child protection matters will be handled in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. Any child protection complaints should be directed to the LADO or the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).

Complaints concerning admissions will be directed to the appropriate admissions authority.

Complaints regarding exclusions will be dealt with in accordance with procedures outlined in the school's Suspension and Exclusion Policy.

The school has an internal whistleblowing procedure for all employees, including contractors and temporary staff outlined in the Whistleblowing Policy. Any whistleblowers not wishing to raise the issue with their employer will direct their complaint to the DfE.

Volunteers who have concerns about the school or a member of staff should make their complaint in line with this policy. Volunteers may also be able to complain to the LA or DfE, depending on what the complaint is about.

This complaints procedure is not to be used when addressing any complaints made about services provided by a third party who may use the school premises or facilities. The headteacher will ensure all third-party suppliers have their own complaints procedures in place, and all complaints concerning this should be directed to the service provider.

Complaints about the content of national curriculum should be made to the DfE. Complaints about how the school delivers the curriculum, including RE and RSHE, will be dealt with using this complaints procedure.

Any complaints about the content of the daily act of collective worship are dealt with by either:

- The LA.
- The local Standard Advisory Council on Religious Education.
- Another relevant body, e.g. the diocese.

Complaints from parents who are dissatisfied with the handling of a request to withdraw their child from RE or collective worship will be handled in line with this complaints procedure.

Requests for information and issues with the school's process for dealing with FOI requests, will be dealt with in accordance with the Freedom of Information Policy.

12. Managing serial and unreasonable complaints

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. The school will not normally limit the contact complainants have with it; however, the school will not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable

behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the DfE.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- Uses threats to intimidate.
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence.
- Knowingly provides falsified information.
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or chair of governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, the school may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.

A decision to stop responding will only be considered in circumstances where the following statements are true:

- Every reasonable step has been taken to address the complainant's concerns.
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options.
- The complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.

If the above criteria are met, in making a decision to stop responding the school will also consider if the complainant is often abusive or aggressive in their communication, makes insulting personal comments about staff or threats towards them, and if the school believes their intent is to disrupt or inconvenience the school.

The school will not stop responding to a complainant on the basis that they are difficult to deal with or they ask complex questions.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the premises.

13. Role of the DfE

If a complainant remains dissatisfied once the complaint procedure has been completed, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State.

If a complainant wishes to escalate a complaint of bias, the DfE will require evidence to be submitted with the complaint. The Secretary of State will only intervene when they believe that the governing board has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.

They will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint except in exceptional circumstances, such as the school acting unlawfully.

When making a final decision about a complaint, the school reserves the right to seek advice from the DfE on whether they are acting reasonably and lawfully; however, they will not be able to advise on how to resolve the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

14. Monitoring and review

The complaints procedure will be reviewed **annually**, taking into account any legislative changes and the latest guidance issued by the DfE. The next scheduled review date for this policy is **September 2026**.

Responsibility for reviewing the procedure belongs to a committee of the governing board, an individual governor or the Headteacher. All projected review dates will be adhered to.

Information gathered through reviewing the complaints procedure will be used to continuously improve and develop the process.

The monitoring and reviewing of complaints will be used to help evaluate the school's performance.

Appendix 1: Upton upon Severn Primary and Pre-School's Complaint Form

Please complete and return to either the Headteacher or Clerk to Governors as appropriate in line with the policy, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

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

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: