Trinity Road
Primary School
RESPECT • ACHIEVE • BELONG

# School Complaints Policy

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| By: | Acting Headteacher |
| Next Review: | January 27 |
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## INDEX

1. INTRODUCTION
2. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CONCERN AND A COMPLAINT
3. WHO TO CONTACT REGARDING YOUR CONCERN OR COMPLAINT
4. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN OR MAKE A COMPLAINT
5. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS
6. TIMESCALES
7. COMPLAINTS RECEIVED OUT OF TERM TIME
8. SCOPE OF THIS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
9. PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS
10. POLICY FOR MANAGING SERIAL AND UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS
11. COMPLAINT CAMPAIGNS
12. MONITORING AND STORAGE OF INFORMATION IN RELATION TO COMPLAINTS
13. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## 1. Introduction

We aim to provide the best possible education and support for our whole school community. This means having a clear, fair, and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints to or against the school, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.

This complaints procedure is not limited to parent/carers or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the school about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (a list and details of these can be found below), we will use this complaints procedure.

All staff will be made aware of these complaints procedures and are expected to review this document regularly in order that they are familiar with our process of dealing with complaints.

This document explains our complaints procedures. The steps that it outlines should be referred to and followed by all pupils, parent/carers, and other stakeholders whenever any concerns arise. Concerns or complaints should be brought to the school's attention as soon as possible to enable a proper investigation to take place.

## 2. 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 procedure. The school takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case the school will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

## 3. Who to contact regarding your concern or complaint

If you are a parent/carer and have a concern to raise, the best route is to inform your child's class teacher first as they will be best placed to help you either directly or by putting you in contact with the relevant member of staff. If you are not a parent/carer of a child at the school, then you should address your concerns to the Headteacher.

We encourage parent/carers to approach staff with any concerns they may have and aim to resolve all issues informally by establishing open dialogue and seeking mutual resolution.

Below is a list outlining who to raise your concern or complaint with and how to contact them.

| Subject of concern or complaint | Contact | Contact Details |
|---|---|---|
| Issue related to child's experience of school | Class Teacher | Via the school office |
| Regarding a staff member | Headteacher | admin@trinityroad.essex.sch.uk detailed as Private and Confidential |
| Regarding the Headteacher | Chair of Governors | clerk@trinityroad.essex.sch.uk detailed as FOA Chair of Governors |
| Regarding a governor | Clerk to Governors | clerk@trinityroad.essex.sch.uk |
| Regarding a strategic decision | Clerk to Governors | clerk@trinityroad.essex.sch.uk |
| If you are not a parent/carer or student at the school | Headteacher | admin@trinityroad.essex.sch.uk detailed as Private and Confidential |

Any leadership team member or governor will refer complaints that are taken to them straight to the above detailed person.

## 4. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

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

Concerns should usually be raised with either the class teacher or headteacher, but the table in Section 4 above provides specific guidance related to the nature of specific concerns. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mrs Blake (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, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. The school office will notify the Clerk or Chair of Governors that a complaint has been submitted.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this document. If you require help in completing the form, please contact 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 because of its specific nature. Schools should assess the content of the anonymous complaint. If it raises issues of safeguarding, serious misconduct, or other significant concerns, it may warrant further investigation despite the lack of a named complainant. If there are sufficient details in the complaint, schools should consider investigating as far as possible. The complaint should also be logged.

## 6. Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Any matter raised later may not be considered unless the headteacher or chair of governors decides that there are exceptional circumstances relevant to the delay. Such exceptional circumstances might include safeguarding concerns or bullying, where a victim(s) may take longer to come forward.

The school will do its utmost to adhere to the timescales laid out within this procedure; however, if it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines detailed, you will be advised and given an explanation. Revised timescales will be agreed with you.

## 7. 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.

## 8. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by the school, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

| Exceptions | Who to contact |
|---|---|
| • Admissions to schools<br>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs<br>• School re-organisation proposals | Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Essex 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.<br>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding: by phone on 03330 139 797 or by e-mail: lado@essex.gov.uk or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).<br>Report a concern about a child \| Essex County Council |

| | |
|---|---|
| • Exclusion of children from school* | Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.<br>**complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.* |
| • Whistleblowing | We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.<br>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.<br>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.<br>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 Trinity Road Primary 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.

## 9. Procedure for handing complaints and concerns 9.1 Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, we will be seeking 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.

**9.2 Withdrawal of a Complaint**

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

**9.3 Initial informal meeting**

Once a concern has been raised, you may be invited to attend an informal meeting with a member of staff or the headteacher/chair of governors to discuss your concerns.

You are welcome to bring a friend, partner or, in the case of a pupil who has raised a concern, a parent/carer to this meeting. It may be appropriate for a pupil to attend the meeting if their parent/carer has raised a concern, depending on the nature of the issue.

Staff have a responsibility to ensure that you understand any future points of action that have been agreed upon in this meeting and will make and then circulate a record of what has been discussed, as well as any outcomes and a plan of action, if one has been agreed.

All staff will do their best to ensure that your concerns are dealt with appropriately and efficiently but if you cannot come to an agreement, or are dissatisfied with the outcome of your meeting, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the headteacher.

There is no suggested timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue through informal discussion although it would be expected that most issues would be resolved within **15 school days** and is not unnecessarily delayed.

**9.4 Formal complaints**

If you do not feel that your concern has been dealt with as you would like at the informal stage, are unhappy with the outcome of your informal meeting or feel that the issue is serious enough that it warrants it, you can make a formal complaint in writing.

In order to ensure that complaints are processed efficiently and effectively, we deal with formal complaints in **TWO** stages.

**Stage 1**

The headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **five** school days.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

*Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.*

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within **15** school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

**Stage 2**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within **15** school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **5** school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within **15** school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of **three** proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from the school available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

*Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.*

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least **10** school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least **5** school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least **THREE** school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from the start of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought for recordings before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

### 9.5 Panel procedure

The panel will determine the procedure to be followed to ensure that it is best placed to deal with the issues arising from the complaint. The procedure for an appeal is usually as follows:

1. The panel will meet together with the clerk before the hearing to meet each other and address any questions about the hearing before other parties enter the room.

2. The complainant and headteacher will enter the hearing together.
3. The chair will introduce the panel members, other parties present and outline the process.
4. The complainant will explain the complaint.
5. The headteacher and panel will question the complainant.
6. The headteacher will explain the school's actions and respond to the complainant's presentation
7. The complainant and panel will question the headteacher.
8. The complainant will sum up their complaint.
9. The headteacher will sum up the school's actions.
10. The chair will explain that both parties will hear from the panel within 10 school days.
11. Both parties will leave together while the panel decides.
12. The clerk will stay to assist the panel with the decision-making process.

The clerk to the panel will ensure that sufficient notes are taken to record an accurate reflection of the points considered and any decisions taken, or actions agreed. Electronic recordings of the hearing will not normally be permitted and, if taken, in this case to help the clerk provide their notes/minutes, this would require the consent of all those present with confirmation that the recording will be destroyed as soon possible after it has been used.

**9.6: Outcome of Stage 2**

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.
- If appropriate, recommendations may also be useful, even if the complaint has been dismissed.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and the school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within **10** school days wherever possible. If there is a need for a delay, then the clerk will inform the complainant and provide relevant reasons.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school. If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint to the Department for Education should they remain dissatisfied.

### 9.7 Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school. They will consider whether the school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with 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.

## Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the school, where the appropriate colleague will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken based on this policy and the procedures contained within them.

| |
|---|
| **Your name:** |
| **Pupil's name (if relevant):** |
| **Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):** |
| **Address:**<br>**Postcode:**<br>**Day time telephone number:**<br>**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:**<br>**Date:** |
| **Official use** |
| **Date acknowledgement sent:** |
| **By who:** |
| **Complaint referred to:** |
| **Date:** |

## 10. Policy for 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. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- 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 co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure.
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- 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 complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated 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 try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the 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 ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school.

## 11. Complaint campaigns

For the purposes of this policy, a complaint campaign is defined as a complaint from three or more separate individuals (whether or not connected with the school) which are all based on the same subject. Depending on the subject in question, the school may deviate from the procedure set out in this policy and instead:

- send a template response to all complainants and/or
- publish a single response on the school's website (as applicable).

## 12. Monitoring and storage of information in relation to complaints

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls. This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel. Records of complaints will be kept securely and then disposed of in line with the school's data retention policy. Complaint records may be inspected by the Secretary of State or any inspection body.

The governing body regularly monitors all complaints that are made, to what stage they progressed and how they were resolved. This is to enable them to spot any emerging patterns, to ensure that similar problems are avoided in the future or to see if they could have been managed any more effectively. The board does not receive any personal data that is not relevant to this monitoring process.

## 13. Roles and Responsibilities

**Complainant**

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

**Investigator**

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent/carer and fair consideration of the complaint through:
    - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
    - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
    - consideration of records and other relevant information
    - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

**Complaints Co-ordinator (this could be the headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)**

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:

- sharing third party information
- additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

**Clerk to the Governing Body**

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the school for distribution to all parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

**Committee Chair**

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting. Documents delivered late will only be admitted on agreement from the Chair. The Chair should consider an adjournment on the day for all parties to read any documents delivered late.
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- All written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
- If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted by an experienced and qualified clerk
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

**Committee Member**

Committee members should be aware that:

- the committee members must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so

- No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant
- We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
- Parent/carers/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.

- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting
- Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
- The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.
- If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent/carer is the complainant, the committee should give the parent/carer the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.
- However, the parent/carer should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent/carer wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.