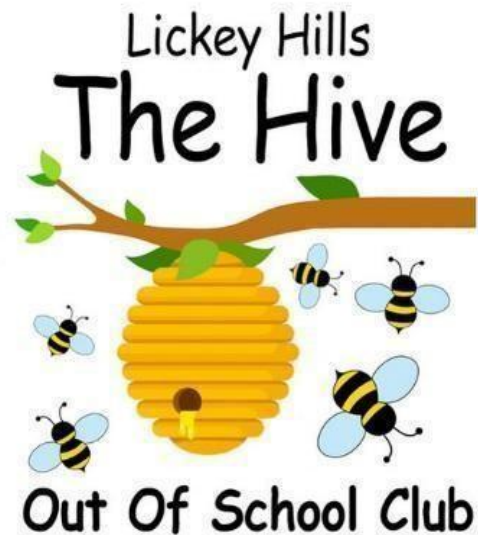


# Lickey Hills Primary School & Nursery



## Complaints Policy

Agreed by Governors	September 2023
Date of Review	September 2025



## **AIMS AND APPLICATION OF THE COMPLAINTS POLICY**

Lickey Hills Primary School & Nursery aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage and is dedicated to continuing to provide the highest quality of education possible throughout the procedure.

This policy has been created to deal with any complaint against a member of staff or the school, relating to any aspects of the school or the provision of facilities or services other than those matters listed in Annex 1.

Any person, including a member of the public, is able to make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services that the school provides. This policy outlines the procedure that the complainant and school must follow and will be used for all complaints. Part 1 of this policy applies only to complaints raised by parents of current registered pupils of Lickey Hills Primary School & Nursery. Part 2 of this policy applies to complaints raised by any other person.

Once a complaint has been made, it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage. If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

The office manager will be the first point of contact when following the complaints procedure.

A copy of the complaints' procedure is available from the School's Reception.

In this document:

- 'school days' excludes weekends and school holidays;
- 'parent' means a parent, carer or anyone with legal responsibility for a child;

## **INTRODUCTION AND KEY PRINCIPLES**

- We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children, and that the Headteacher and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, we are obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or other parties.
- If any parent is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school, we encourage that person to talk to the child's class teacher immediately.
- We deal with all complaints in compliance with guidance/regulation set out by the Department for Education, The Education and Skills Funding



Agency (ESFA) and The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014. Schedule 1, Part 7.

- We expect our members of staff to be addressed in a respectful manner and for communication to remain calm at all times. The procedure under Part 3 will only be used on very rare occasions to deal with unreasonably persistent complainants or unreasonable complainant behaviour.
- Concerns or complaints should be brought to our attention as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than 3 months after the incident being complained of (or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within 3 months of the last of these incidents) will not be considered unless the school accepts that there are good reasons to explain the delay or the complaint is about a particularly serious matter.
- We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.
- On rare occasions the school may receive complaints from a number of parents relating to the same issue. In order to deal with these complaints efficiently we will follow the procedure set out in Part 4.
- If it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this procedure, parents will be advised accordingly and given an explanation as to why this has been the case and provided with revised timescales. If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority safeguarding teams or tribunals/courts, 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 the school in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.
- Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints at later stages.
- We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.
- At each stage in the procedure, the school wants to resolve the concern or 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 taken 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

### **Part 1: Complaints procedure for parents**

We have adopted a three-stage process for dealing with complaints from parents:

- Stage 1 - Complaint heard by member of staff
- Stage 2 - Complaint heard by Headteacher
- Stage 3 - Complaint heard by Complaints Panel

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- Lickey Hills Primary School & Nursery aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint.
- When considering complaints, we endeavour to deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed and then resolved.

### **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

- Our Complaints Procedure will:



- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
  - Be easily accessible and publicised;
  - Be simple to understand and use;
  - Be impartial;
  - Be non-adversarial;
  - Allow swift handling with established time limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
  - Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary; Keep complaints confidential;
  - Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
  - Provide information to the School's senior management team to enable services to be improved.
- The school will be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. We will take concerns seriously at the earliest stage to reduce the numbers that develop into complaints.

### STAGE 1 - INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- Most concerns will be dealt with informally and parents are encouraged to speak to a member of staff to discuss your concerns. The formal procedures set out below will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.
- If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing within our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school and are making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress.
- Our school operates an open-door policy and, as such, parents may wish to book in some time to talk to the relevant member of staff if this would be beneficial in resolving their concern informally.



- If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Board will do all they can to ensure the issue is resolved informally through a dialogue with the persons concerned.
- At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

## STAGE 2 - FORMAL RESOLUTION

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (as set out in the above paragraphs), then parents should put their complaint in writing using the complaints form at Annex 2 of this policy and hand this into the School for the attention of the Headteacher. Please mark it as Private and Confidential.
- If you need help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation for example 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.
  - If the complaint is about the Headteacher or a member of the Governing Board, it should be sent to the Clerk of the Governing Board at the School's address who will arrange for a governor to carry out the Stage 2 procedure. Please mark it as Private and Confidential.
- The Headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously. The complaint will be investigated thoroughly (by the Headteacher or a person delegated to undertake the investigation).
- The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headteacher will meet or speak with the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- The Headteacher will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet parents within 10 school days of the formal complaint being received.



- Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made which will be communicated to parents in writing, outlining the steps taken to investigate the complaint and giving the reasons for the decision. The written decision should be provided no later than 10 school days after speaking with or meeting with parents/guardians to discuss the matter.
- The school will hold a written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and the school's decision. The record will be retained for six years from the date of the resolution. The statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.
- Only if Stage 2 proceedings fail to resolve the matter should a complaint progress to Stage 3.

### STAGE 3 - COMPLAINTS PANEL

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3, following failure to reach an earlier resolution with the Headteacher or Chair of Governors in respect of their formal complaint, they may request that their complaint is considered by the Complaints Panel. Such a request must be made in writing addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Board of the school, who will usually act as Clerk for the Complaints Panel.
- This request for further assessment of the complaint will, for the purposes of this procedure, be known as an 'appeal'.
- Parents must lodge their appeal in writing within 10 school days of the date of the School's decision under Stage 2 otherwise the complaint will be closed.
- The parents should provide, in writing, a list of the complaints made against the school and which they believe to have been resolved unsatisfactorily by the Stage 2 procedure, along with the remedies sought in respect of each complaint.
- The Complaints Panel is only obliged to consider the complaint lodged in this 'initial submission' although they may use their discretion to consider other relevant and related matters that may subsequently arise.



- The Clerk provides an independent source of advice on procedure for all parties and will ensure that the proceedings and venue of any hearing are accessible.
- On receipt of an appeal, the Clerk will then endeavour to convene an independent Complaints Panel hearing as soon as possible, usually no later than 20 school days after receipt of the notification from the parents that they wish to invoke Stage 3. The Panel date will be dependent upon the availability of the Panel members. If, despite best efforts, it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date and time for a hearing within a reasonable timeframe, the Clerk may determine that the hearing proceeds on the basis of written submissions from both parties.
- As soon as reasonably practicable and in any event at least 5 school days before the hearing, you will be sent written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing, together with brief details of the committee members who will be present. The Independent Complaints Panel will consist of two governors from the Governing Board who have not previously been involved in the complaint, and one person independent of the management and running of the School.
- The following are entitled to attend a hearing and/or, submit written representations and address the Panel:
  - The parent(s) who may be accompanied by one other person, such as a friend, relative, advocate or interpreter should they wish;
  - The Headteacher of the School;
  - Any other interested person whom the Complaints Panel considers having a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision making.
  - Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.
- Where required, the Complaints Panel may request any reports, documents, chronology or other useful information in advance of the hearing. Evidence will be sent to and collated by the Clerk who will distribute the information to the relevant parties in advance of the hearing. 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 procedure to be followed during the hearing will be explained to the parties by letter in advance of the hearing. The Clerk 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 unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it, and, in any event, would require the consent of all those present.
- Unless otherwise stated, the procedure for the Stage 3 hearing is as follows:
  - the parent and School representative will enter the hearing together;
  - the Chair of the Committee will introduce the committee members and outline the process;
  - the parent will explain the complaint;
  - the school representative and committee members will question the parent;
  - the School representative will explain the School/school's actions;
  - the parent and the committee members will question the School representative;
  - the parent will sum up their complaint;
  - the school representative will sum up the School/school's actions;
  - the Chair of the Committee will explain that both parties will hear from the committee within 5 school days;
  - both parties will leave together while the committee decides;
  - the Clerk will stay to assist the committee with its decision making.
- The Clerk and or Complaints Committee reserves the right to modify the above procedure at their sole discretion, for example requiring the parent and the School representative to present their complaint/actions separately to the Committee in the absence of the other party.
- After due consideration of the facts considered relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, and notify the complainant and, where relevant, the



person complained about within 10 school days of the hearing. The committee can (by a majority if necessary):

- 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 or school systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.
- The decision reached by the Complaints Panel is final. Any decision reached that may have financial implications for the school will need the appropriate approval from the school, although any such approval must be compatible with the decision of the Complaints Panel.
  - The findings and recommendations of the panel will be available for inspection on the school premises by the school and the Headteacher.
  - A written record of all complaints made will be kept of all formal complaints along with details of whether they were resolved following a formal procedure, or progression to a panel hearing.
  - School will record the action it takes as a result of complaints regardless of whether they were upheld.
  - There is no further right of appeal to the Governing Board or school. All complainants have the right, as a last resort, to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency if they are not satisfied with the way in which their complaint has been considered. You can contact the ESFA via their complaints form on the following link:
    - <https://www.education.gov.uk/form/school-complaints-form>
  - The ESFA 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 and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

## 8.0 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW



- The school will review this policy every two years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.
- The Governing Board monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly.
- Governors consider any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

## **Part 2: Concerns or Complaints from persons other than parents**

Part 1 of this complaints policy applies only to complaints made by parents or carers of current registered pupils of the school. However, the school wishes to work closely with other members of the local community and will deal with their concerns and complaints as follows:

### Stage 1:

A concern regarding a school or its operations may be made to any member of staff. That member of staff will attempt to resolve the matter immediately or may, if appropriate, refer the matter to their line manager or member of the senior leadership team (SLT) who is best placed to deal with the concern. It is expected that most concerns will be responded to orally or in writing within 5 school days. If a longer period is required, you will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

### Stage 2

Where a concern is not resolved at stage 1, or you wish your concerns to be dealt with immediately as a formal complaint, you should put your complaint in writing (using the Complaints Procedure Form in Annex 2 of this document) and send this to the school Office Manager to investigate. The Headteacher may delegate the task of investigation and/or responding to the complaint to a member of SLT or may escalate the complaint straight to stage 3. A formal response to the complaint will usually be provided within 10 school days of receipt of the letter of complaint although if a longer period is required to respond, you will be kept updated.



### Stage 3

If you are not satisfied with the response at stage 2, you may request a review by writing to the Clerk of the Governing Board of the School. You should write to the Clerk within 10 school days of receipt of the letter at stage 2. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk will arrange for a governor to consider the complaint alone or may convene a complaints committee on the same terms as set out in Part 1 of this complaints policy. The decision at this stage will usually be sent to the complainant within 20 school days of receipt of the request for a review. The decision at stage 3 exhausts the school's complaints procedure.

### **Part 3: Unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonable complainant behaviour**

There are rare circumstances where the school will deviate from the Complaints Procedure set out in Parts 1 and 2. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- where the complainant's behaviour or language towards staff or members of the School's Governing Board is abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening;
- where the complainant's behaviour is hindering the proper consideration of complaints and/or the proper running of the School because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact, 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 cooperate with the complaint 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 considered 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
- seeks an unrealistic outcome, such as the inappropriate dismissal of staff or the inappropriate suspension or exclusion of a child.
- 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
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums
- where the complainant's complaint is clearly frivolous, vexatious and/or has patently insufficient grounds. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as:
  - complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
  - insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
  - insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
  - complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
  - demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value
- where the complainant's complaint is the same, similar to or based on the same facts of a complaint which has already been considered in full.
- In these circumstances, the school may:
  - inform the complainant that their behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent and ask them to change it;
  - restrict the complainant's access to the School e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times or banning the complainant from the School's premises. Any such arrangements will be reviewed after six months;
  - conduct the Complaints Committee on the papers only i.e. not hold a hearing;



- refuse to consider the complaint and, where Part 1 of this procedure applies, refer the complainant directly to Stage 4.
- In all such cases the school will write to tell the complainant why their behaviour is felt to be unacceptable or unreasonably persistent, what action the school is taking as a result, and the duration of that action.
- The school may take the decision not to respond to any further correspondence where:
  - the school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
  - the complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options and
  - the complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.
- The case for ceasing further correspondence is stronger where:
  - letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive or make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
  - there is reason to believe the complainant is contacting the Trust with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience
- Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, members of the local governing board or trustees, the Trust will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, the complainant may not be given prior warning of that action.

#### **Part 4: 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 Trust 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/Trust's website (as applicable)



**Annex 1**

Matters excluded from scope of this policy

Excluded Matters	Signposting
Admissions	The process for challenging admissions decisions is set out in our admissions policy in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.
Child protection matters	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).
Exclusions	The process for challenging exclusions decisions is set out in the DfE's statutory guidance and information can be found at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">https://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>
National Curriculum content	Please contact the Department for Education at <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>
School re-organisation proposals	Where concerns are not adequately addressed by the trust, complaints can be raised directly with the Department for Education.
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 directly.



Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Certain complaints about staff may need to 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.
Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should be raised directly with the local authority.
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 whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a> Volunteer staff who have concerns should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain directly to the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of the complaint





## Annex 2

### COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FORM

If you have tried unsuccessfully to resolve your complaint and wish to take the matter further, please complete this form and send it to the Office Manager, (If your complaint is against the headteacher, you will need to send the form to the Clerk to Governors.) Please mark it as Private and Confidential.

Your Name:	Address:
Pupil's name (if relevant):	
Pupil's date of birth:	
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):	
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
Email:	Postcode:



What is your complaint concerning, and what action would you like the Headteacher to take?

When did you discuss your concern/complaint with the appropriate member of staff?

What was the result of the discussion?

Signed:

Date:



## Annex 3

# Roles and Responsibilities Complainant

### 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 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

(headteacher / designated complaints governor 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 or the Clerk and 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 Local 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 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
- 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
- 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
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).



## Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so no governor / trustee may sit on the committee if they have had 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. Parents/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 is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend. However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent 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.