



The Flourish Federation

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Ratified	18 th March 2026	Review	March 2029
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Complaints policy and procedure

FLOURISH FEDERATION

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints policy and 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 The Flourish Federation 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.

The school is committed to using public resources responsibly. This procedure is designed to balance individual concerns with the wider interests of pupils and the school community.

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 Flourish Federation takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Except in cases involving safeguarding, serious misconduct, or legal compliance, complainants are expected to raise concerns informally with the appropriate member of staff and allow reasonable opportunity for resolution before submitting a formal complaint.

Where this stage has not been attempted, the school may direct the complainant to informal resolution before accepting a formal complaint.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the complaints co-ordinator will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the complaints co-ordinator should 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 Flourish Federation should attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person by parents, carers (including parents or carers of children no longer at the school) and members of the public, 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 in the first instance. At this stage informal mediation may be offered. While this can be useful in helping The Flourish Federation and complainants reach an agreement and move forward, there are times when it may not be the most appropriate course of action.

The school may recommend mediation as a preferred means of resolving appropriate complaints. Where mediation is declined without reasonable cause, this may be taken into account when determining how the complaint proceeds.

Mediation can:

- provide a helpful mechanism for discussion when a concern is raised
- help to rebuild the relationship between all parties

It should not be used as a substitute for an investigation during the formal stages of the complaints procedure.

If neither the complainant nor the school considers that mediation will serve any practical purpose at this point, the complainant will not be prevented from moving to the next investigative stage of the complaints procedure.

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 Headteachers) should be made in the first instance, to Nat South (Junior School Headteacher) or Cathy Smith (Infant School Headteacher) via the school office. Please mark them as *Private and Confidential*.

Complaints that involve or are about a Headteacher should be addressed to Mr R Baldock (School Business Director) via the school office. Please mark them as *Private and Confidential*.

The School Business Director will determine whether the complaint meets the threshold for formal consideration and will oversee the appropriate next steps, including referral to the Chair of Governors where required.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the governing body should be submitted via the school office and will be reviewed by the School Business Director, who will determine the appropriate route and oversight arrangements.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. 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.

The federation expects all complainants to engage with this procedure respectfully and constructively. Abusive, aggressive, or inappropriate conduct may result in communication restrictions in line with this policy.

Threshold for Formal Complaints

To be accepted as a formal complaint under this procedure, a submission must meet the following minimum criteria:

- clearly identify the specific issue(s) of concern;
- explain how the matter has affected the complainant or their child;
- indicate what outcome or resolution is being sought; and
- relate to matters within the scope of this complaints procedure.

Submissions that are unclear, incomplete, excessively repetitive, primarily opinion-based without reference to specific actions or decisions, or which fall outside the scope of this procedure may be returned to the complainant for clarification before being accepted.

Where a submission does not meet the threshold for a formal complaint, the school will explain this in writing and, where appropriate, offer guidance on how the concern may be reframed or addressed informally.

The school reserves discretion to determine whether a submission meets the threshold for investigation, taking account of fairness, proportionality, and the individual circumstances of the complainant.

Where a complaint has been returned for clarification or informal resolution, timescales under this procedure will normally commence from the date that a compliant submission is received.

Length and Format of Written Complaints

To support timely, fair, and proportionate handling of complaints, written submissions at each stage of this procedure should normally not exceed 2,000 characters (excluding appendices and supporting documents).

Complainants are encouraged to summarise their key concerns clearly and focus on the specific issues they wish the school to consider.

Supporting evidence, documents, or records may be submitted separately as appendices where relevant.

Where a complainant is unable to comply with this limit due to disability, communication needs, or exceptional circumstances, reasonable adjustments will be considered.

The school reserves discretion to accept longer submissions where this is necessary to ensure fairness and proper consideration of the complaint.

Support is available from the school office to assist complainants in presenting their concerns clearly and concisely.

Anonymous complaints

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

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.

Where a complaint is submitted immediately following a distressing incident, the school may offer a short cooling-off period to support reflection and informal resolution before formal investigation.

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.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools	For concerns about admissions please see the School's Admissions Policy or contact Kent County Council Admissions team
• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs	Special Educational Needs: The Complainant can use this policy to complain unless the Complainant's child has an Education Health and Care Plan and the Complainant wishes to appeal against a decision that the Local Authority has taken. If this is the case, the Complainant needs to contact the Local Authority
• School re-organisation proposals	School re-organisation proposals should be raised with the KCC Contact Centre 01622 671411
• 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.
• Freedom of Information	Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests: please see the School's Data Protection and Freedom of Information Policies
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-

	<u>discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</u> <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure. Please also refer to the school's behaviour policy for further information prior to making the complaint.</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. 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. Anonymous complaints: Please refer to the School's Whistleblowing Policy
Staff grievances	Staff grievance, capability or disciplinary; these are covered by separate School Policies and 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 The Flourish Federation in relation to their complaint, we will suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

If a complainant contacts The Flourish Federation again in relation to their complaint, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and The Flourish Federation will ignore any comments until they have completed the investigation the initial complaints procedure in full.

Duplicate complaints

A duplicate complaint is regarded as the following: After closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, the school receive a duplicate complaint from:

- a spouse
- a partner
- a grandparent
- a child

The school will inform the new complainant that the school has already considered that complaint and the local process is complete. The school should advise the new complainant to contact the Department for Education should they be dissatisfied with the school's handling of the original complaint.

Any new aspects to the original complaint will be investigated and dealt with to the full extent of the complaints procedure.

The school is not required to reconsider matters that have been substantively addressed through this procedure, unless significant new evidence is presented.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the Flourish Federation 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

The complaints process cannot overturn lawful professional decisions, change statutory requirements, or provide disciplinary outcomes. The purpose of the procedure is to review fairness, process, and reasonable practice.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the respective headteacher (unless they are about a headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form including what actions you may feel might resolve the problem at this stage), or by telephone.

Where the complaint is about a Headteacher, it must be submitted via the school office for the attention of School Business Director.

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

Where the headteacher meets or speaks with the complainant, the matters discussed will be written down so there is no misunderstanding. This may be included as part of the letter sent to the complainant at the conclusion of the complaint investigation. The headteacher may ask for a trusted individual to be present to act as note-taker.

Complainants are expected to raise all relevant aspects of a complaint at the earliest opportunity. Related matters arising from the same set of circumstances will normally be considered together within a single process.

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) should:

- 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 20 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 Flourish Federation should 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.

In cases where the complaint is about a Headteacher, the School Business Director will determine whether the complaint meets the threshold for formal investigation and will arrange for an appropriate and impartial Stage 1 investigation to be conducted, including referral to the Chair of Governors where required.

For the purpose of this document, we have assigned the term 'umbrella staff' to those members of staff who work across the federation. For example, School Business Director, Site Manager, etc.

Note: If the complaint is regarding a member of umbrella staff, then the complaints procedure will be followed as per all other complaints. However, in this situation, both headteachers will be involved in the dealing of the complaint throughout the process.

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 may be considered by a suitably skilled and impartial member of the Governing body or if there are no suitably skilled and impartial members it could be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the clerk on behalf of the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the chosen investigating body will provide a formal written response to the complainant and governing body.

If the complaint is about a 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.

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.

The request to escalate the complaint should go via the school office for the attention of the School Business Director within 5 school days of receiving the Stage 1 response. Escalation requests must clearly state the grounds on which the Stage 1 outcome is being challenged (for example procedural error, new evidence, or unreasonable decision-making).

Upon receipt, the School Business Director will:

- acknowledge the request within 5 school days;
- review whether the escalation meets the criteria for Stage 2 consideration; and
- determine whether the complaint should proceed to a formal complaints committee.

Where the criteria are not met, the complainant will be informed in writing of the decision and the reasons for this. This will normally conclude the school's internal complaints process.

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

A Stage 2 complaint will normally only be accepted where there is evidence that:

- there has been a procedural irregularity at Stage 1;
- significant new evidence has emerged that was not previously available; or
- the Stage 1 decision was unreasonable in light of the evidence presented.

Disagreement with the outcome alone does not constitute sufficient grounds for escalation.

Where a complaint is accepted for Stage 2, the matter will be passed to the Clerk to the Governing Body for administration of the complaints committee process.

The Clerk to the Governing Body will then support the administration of any Stage 2 complaints committee once convened but will not act as the initial recipient of complaints or escalation requests.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 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 Flourish Federation available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local maintained school, local governing board members or governors and trustees from within academies or multi-academy trusts, an associate member of another governing body or a school the Governing Body have a joint panel agreement with, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2. Complainants can request an independent complaints committee if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. Complainants should provide the Clerk with evidence of bias in support of their request. The Governing Body should err on the side of caution if the appearance of bias may be sufficient to taint any decision reached.

If the committee is convening following rejection of three proposed dates without good reason the complaint will proceed on the basis of written submissions from both parties but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

When the complainant attends the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. The Department for Education recommends that neither the complainant nor the school bring legal representation. These committees are not a form of legal proceedings. The aim of the governors committee should be:

- reconciliation
- to put right things that may have gone wrong

The Department for Education recognises 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 7 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 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.

Evidence submitted must be directly relevant to the matters under investigation. The school reserves discretion to exclude material that is repetitive, excessive, or unrelated to the issues being considered.

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 Stage 1 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 before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken. Schools are data controllers in their own right and have the discretion via their policies to decide for themselves whether to allow complainants to record meetings, if it's not required for the purposes of a reasonable adjustment.

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.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and The Flourish Federation with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 school days.

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 Flourish Federation along with copies of the minutes.

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 convened by the clerk from either impartial members of the GB or from another local maintained school, local governing board members and governors from within academies or multi academy trusts (academy governors should seek guidance and understanding from the clerk on the different legislative framework that may need to be taken into consideration during the complaint's hearing at the appeal stage), an associate member of another governing body or from a school with which the Governing Body have a joint panel agreement. 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 systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and The Flourish Federation with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 school days.

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 Flourish Federation along with copies of the minutes.

A record of the decision and rationale for accepting or declining escalation will be retained.

Complaint campaigns

Occasionally, you may become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints:

- all based on the same subject
- from complainants unconnected with the school

Following an internal investigation into the subject matter by the Senior Leadership Team the school will respond either by:

- sending a template response to all complainants or
- publishing a single response on the school's website

If complainants in this case remain dissatisfied they may refer to the “Next Steps” at the end of this policy.

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 Flourish Federation. They will consider whether the Flourish Federation 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.

Policy for managing serial and unreasonable requests and complaints

The Flourish Federation is committed to dealing with all requests and complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service. Anyone has the right to raise a new complaint at any time. We will not normally limit the contact that parents or other parties have with the 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 complaints as *‘those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints’*. The same is applicable to unreasonable or serial requests where they are of such frequency or content that they hinder the capacity for staff to perform their professional duties effectively.

Examples: 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 co-operate 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 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, 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.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- maliciously;

- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

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 headteachers or Chair of Governors should discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking including suggesting that the complainant asks a third party to act on their behalf such as the local Citizens Advice.

If the behaviour continues, the headteachers should 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, we may specify methods of communication (such as restrict the complaint to a single point of contact via an email address) and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of harassment, aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately (including the decision to stop responding) and the police informed. This may include barring an individual from school premises.

Barring from the School Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, Schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Schools will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask him/her to leave school premises. In serious cases, the headteachers or the local authority can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the person may wish to make. Schools should always give that person the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing. Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Chair of

Governors. The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the person should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place and when the decision will be reviewed, usually after 6 months.

Complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

Complaint Form

Please complete and return via the school office.

Complaints will be directed to the appropriate person in line with this procedure (normally the Headteacher, or the School Business Director where the complaint concerns a Headteacher or is a Stage 2 escalation).

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 concern, 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:

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.
- clearly state the outcome sought; Complaints that do not identify a realistic or proportionate resolution may be returned for clarification.

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(s) 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.

Clerk to the Governing Body

Once a complaint has been accepted for a Stage 2 hearing by the School Business Director, the clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee once the process is underway 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 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

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.