Orleans Primary School



Complaints Procedure – including the procedure for dealing with serial and unreasonable complaints.

Maintained Schools are required by section 29 of the Education Act 2002 to establish a complaints procedure and to publicise this, in line with any statutory guidance released by the DfE.

Governor's Committee Responsible	PC&C
Status	Statutory
Review Cycle	Annually
Date written / last review	September 2026
Date of next review	September 2027
Published on Website	Yes

1) Introduction

The school's Governors, Head of School and Executive Headteacher are committed to providing the best educational experience they can for every pupil attending this school. They recognise the value to everyone concerned of dealing fairly, speedily and effectively with any complaint against their decisions, actions or omissions, which a pupil or parent or other aggrieved person may have. To this end, our school has adopted the underlying principles and procedures set out in this document.

This policy has been written utilising the advice from the DfE Best Practice Guidance for school complaint procedures 2020. This policy will be updated annually or prior to the scheduled date of review in order to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance, or best practice, where appropriate.

Under section 29 of the Education Act 2002 (see summary at Appendix 3) Governing Boards of all maintained schools in England are required to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities which the school provides. There is a requirement for all schools to publicise their Complaints Procedure. Orleans Primary School publishes ours on our school website.

This policy is reviewed annually.

2) Framework of Principles

Our Complaints Procedure:

- encourages resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- is easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- is **simple** to understand and use;
- is **impartial**;
- is **non-adversarial**;
- allows **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensures a full and **fair** investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respects people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- addresses all the issues and provides an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary; and
- provides **information** to the school's Senior Leadership Team so that provision can be improved
- ensures the procedure is **without prejudice**, with all **equality** and **disability** rights being respected.

3) Scope of this Complaints Procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
● Admissions to schools ● Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs ● School reorganisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school reorganisation proposals should be raised with the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. Please refer to their website for details of who to contact.
● Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our Safeguarding and Child Protection and Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.

	If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
● Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. Complaints about the application of the Behaviour Policy can be made through this policy.
● 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 whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's Complaints Procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
● Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
● Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
● Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own Complaints Procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.
● National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If a complainant commences legal action against Orleans 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.

4) Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Orleans Primary School will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. 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.

5) Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing and the withdrawal will be acknowledged by the school.

6) Time Limits

The complainant 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. Complaints made outside of this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible using time limits given within this procedure. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set.

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

In both instances the complainant will be notified and provided with an explanation for the delay.

Complaints which are received outside of term time or on the last day of a term/half term will be considered to have been received on the first day of school after the holiday period.

7) Dealing with a Complaint

7.1 Dealing with Complaints – initial concerns

It is important to be clear about 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*'.

A school complaint is a communication sent by a person or persons with a legitimate interest in the school that expresses dissatisfaction about the standard of teaching of members of the teaching staff, or about the conduct, actions or omissions of members of the teaching or non-teaching staff employed at the school. It is important to differentiate this from a concern, which is a potential issue of some worry or apprehension which should be dealt with through informal discussions with the Class Teacher or Senior Teacher within school.

Where a complainant is a pupil under the age of 18 years, the complaint may be pursued only by, or on behalf of, the child's parent or carer. Where someone other than a pupil or a parent or carer is pursuing a complaint on their behalf, this can be done only with the written consent of the pupil or parent concerned.

7.2 Serial, Persistent and Vexatious Complaints

At Orleans Primary School, we will always aim to be helpful regarding requests for information and where complaints or concerns are raised. However, there may be rare occasions where an individual may remain dissatisfied despite the complaints procedure being followed fully. The DfE guidance states that continuing to investigate the same complaint by the original complainant could not be regarded as a good use of the school's time and resources to reply to repeated email, letters or telephone calls making substantially the

same point. Therefore, if this situation occurs the Chair of Governors will consider whether it is appropriate to pursue the matter any further and will advise the complainant in writing.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as complaints which are obsessive, persistent, repetitious and prolific and where the basis of the complaint has no merit, purpose or value often with the expectation of an unrealistic outcome. Where a complaint has been judged as serial or unreasonable the school will refer to its policy for dealing with such complaints.

Please see **appendix one** for our policy for dealing with serial, persistent and vexatious complaints.

7.3 Complaint Campaigns
On occasions, schools may become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints. If we receive what we consider to be a large volume of complaints, all based on the same subject and possibly from complainants not connected to the school, then we will treat these complaints as being part of a campaign and respond in one of the following two ways, depending on the nature and scale of the complaint:

1. Send the same response to all complainants
2. Publish a single response on the school's website.

7.4 Anonymous Complaints
We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head of School, Executive Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

7.5 Complaints about Third Parties
Third party providers have their own complaints procedures in place and should be contacted directly by parents. These would include services such as club providers or the provision of school lunches. The complainant should follow the provider's complaints procedure.

7.6 Complaints about SEN Provision
We hope that your child is happy at Orleans Primary school, occasionally, however, a problem may arise. We hope that we will be able to resolve any concern speedily, in a helpful manner. We accept that on occasions, our initial attempts to resolve an issue may be unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. A staged procedure is outlined below. This has been created to ensure that all problems and difficulties can be resolved swiftly.

1) In the majority of circumstances, the matter should be raised initially with the class teacher.
2) If a satisfactory conclusion has not been achieved, then an appointment should be made with the SENCO. This meeting should take place as soon as possible and normally within seven working days of the concern being raised.
3) Occasionally the person complaining may be of the view that the complaint should go directly to one of the senior professionals at the school. If this is the case, the matter should be raised in the first instance with the Assistant Headteacher for that phase.
4) If a satisfactory conclusion is not reached after a meeting with the Head of school, a second follow up meeting can be requested with the Executive Headteacher.
5) If the matter remains unresolved following this, a formal letter should be made to the school's Chair of Governors. The letter should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, sealed and handed in at the school office.

8. The process and procedure for making a complaint
The school will always aim to resolve any concerns or complaints at the earliest possible opportunity. The school has a process in place for complainants to follow to ensure that concerns and complaints are dealt with effectively.

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 Two of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Head of school) should be made in the first instance to the Head of school via the school office. All correspondence should be marked, 'Private and confidential'.

Complaints that involve or are about the Head of school should be addressed to the Executive Headteacher. Complaints against the Executive Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office. This correspondence should be marked, 'Private and Confidential.'

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to Julie Fox, the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. This correspondence should be marked, 'Private and Confidential.'

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included in appendix two. If you require help in completing the form please contact the school office. You can also ask third parties, such as 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.

8.1 Investigating Complaints
The person investigating the complaint with ensure that they:

- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- Establish in detail what has happened so far and who has been involved.
- Meet with the complainant or contact them (if specific details are unclear or further information is necessary.)
- Clarify what the complainant feels would resolve the situation
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those who complained of allowing them to be accompanied if they so wish.
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning to clarify facts.
- Keep clear and detailed notes of the interview.

8.2 Managing and Recording Complaints
A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. Where it is in person or by a telephone call, at the end of the meeting/telephone call it would be helpful if the member of staff ensured that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. To achieve this, a brief note of the meeting and telephone call must be kept together with a completed copy of the complaint form and a copy of any written response added to the record.

The progress of a complaint made under this procedure and the final outcome must be recorded including details of whether the complaint was resolved and how it was resolved, i.e., whether it went to an appeal panel. Action taken as a result of the complaint must also be recorded.

All data pertaining to a complaint made under this procedure must be kept confidential and regard must be had to the General Data Protection Regulation.

8.3 Informal Complaints
At this early stage, it is expected that the complainant would communicate directly with the member of staff concerned or Phase Leader (AHT) to discuss. This may be by letter, email, telephone, or in person by arranging an appointment via the school office. Emails must be sent to the info@orleans.richmond.sch.uk for the attention of the teacher concerned.

We encourage, where possible, all complaints to be resolved informally by speaking to the Head of School or member of staff.

Most complaints can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that the majority of complaints will be resolved at this informal stage. The member of staff dealing with the complainant will seek to find out how the complainant feels that the situation can be resolved. If the complaint cannot be resolved then the complaint will be passed to the Headteacher/Assistant Headteachers or other senior leaders .

8.4 Formal Procedures Stage 1
The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the concern prove unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Formal complaints must be made to the Head of School (unless they are about the Head of school), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.
The Head of School will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (by either letter or email) within seven working days. Any written complaints must be marked, 'Private and Confidential.'

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

Note: The Head of School 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 Head of School (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 Head of School will provide a formal written response within 14 working days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Head of School 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 Orleans Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Head of School 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 Head of School, Executive 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 Chair of Governors 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 external/independent suitably skilled Governor who will act as an independent investigator appointed by the Governing Body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Please see **Appendix Three** for further information on the roles and responsibilities when handling a complaint.

8.5 Formal Procedures 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 to the Governors, via the school office, within 14 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 (by either letter or email) within seven 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 14 working 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 Orleans Primary 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 the disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with the complainant.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least seven 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 five school days before the meeting.

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

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 Orleans Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within seven 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.

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, co-opted Governors who are from different schools.

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 Orleans Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

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

8.6 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.

Appendix One – Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Orleans Primary 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.

Orleans Primary 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 at any point during the complaints procedure
- 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 Head of School or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable'* marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Head of School will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Orleans Primary 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 Orleans Primary School.

Appendix two – Complaint Form

Please complete and return to V Coward (Head of School)) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

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

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Appendix Three

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 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 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 Head of School or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems. The Head of School 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.
- 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 well written 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 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.

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.

Policy reviewed February 2025.

Appendix Four - School Complaints Procedure Flowchart

The school will always attempt to resolve any concerns or complaints as quickly and thoroughly as possible. When a concern or a complaint is raised then the school will follow the procedure below. Where a complaint is about the Head of School, Executive or the Chair of Governors then a suitable Governor will be appointed to investigate the complaint.

