Denefield School
Parental Complaints Policy and Procedures

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Type of policy	Statutory
Policy owner	Headteacher
Location of policy	Website

Denefield School
Parental Complaints Policy and Procedures

1. Purpose of the policy

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which states that we must have and make available a written policy and procedure to deal with complaints from parents/carers of pupils at school. It is also based on guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE) on creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations and refers to good practice guidance on setting up complaint procedures. This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association. The policy will be published on our school website.

2. Aims

The school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents/carers of pupils. When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- be impartial and non-adversarial,
- facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary,
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response,
- respect complainants' desire for confidentiality,
- treat complainants with respect,
- keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process,
- consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes.

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, the formal procedure will be followed. We aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

3. The importance of parental feedback

We welcome parental feedback. This may be through the school's annual parent surveys, the regular Headteacher's open house events or through direct communication with school via office@denefield.org.uk. We listen to all feedback carefully; we are constantly seeking to improve and will always seek to rectify any mistakes we have

made. At the same time, it is important to be clear that feedback will not always lead to a change in school policy.

4. 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*'.

5. Scope

This policy covers all complaints from parents or carers of pupils at Denefield School about any provision of community facilities or services by our school, other than complaints that are dealt with under separate statutory procedures.

For anyone else, seeking to raise concerns or a complaint, we would refer you to our Complaints Policy for Members of the Public.

6. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of the policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Trust Board on a regular basis. The Headteacher reports to the Trust Board regarding the number and nature of complaints on a termly basis.

7. Procedure

7.1 How to raise a concern or make a complaint

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 complaint's procedure. Denefield School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. We understand, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Denefield School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this procedure.

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. It may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. We request that formal complaints are made on the template form attached at Appendix 1 to aid consideration and resolution. We will endeavour to provide assistance if it is needed at to assist you in making a complaint.

Please contact the school office (office@denefield.org.uk). You can also ask third party organisations like Citizens Advice to help you. We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, if appropriate, we will consider an anonymous complaint if there would be a significant risk to the complainant or another person if the complainant was identified.

Concerns should be raised with either a member of staff or Headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make 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 Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be, as the ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

You should not approach individual Trustees to raise concerns or complaints. Trustees have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

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

Complaints are overseen by a complaints co-ordinator who is either a member of the senior leadership team or a trustee. The trustee complaints co-ordinator will analyse any trends, concerns or issues which have been identified at formal stage 2 or formal stage 3 (see below) and will report to the Trust Board as appropriate.

7.2 Complaints not covered by this procedure

Complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures are not covered by this complaint's procedure, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with West Berkshire Council or Reading Borough Council as appropriate.
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.

	If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). LADO, West Berkshire Council 01635 503153
• Exclusion of children from school *	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. Please refer to our Exclusions Policy. **Complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through this complaints procedure.*
• 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 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 complaints about the school should follow this complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the Local Authority 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. You will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint, but you will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• 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	Contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

7.3 Time limits

A complaint must be raised within 3 months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within 3 months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

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

7.4 Complaints being investigated by other bodies

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority 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 you commence legal action against Denefield School in relation to your complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

7.5 Duplicate complaints

If Denefield School receives a duplicate complaint from your spouse, partner or a family member, then we will advise them that the content of the complaint has already been considered. We will also advise the new complainant to direct their complaint to DfE (see page 9) if they are dissatisfied with how the complaint has been handled.

7.6 Withdrawal of a complaint

If you want to withdraw your complaint, we will ask you to confirm this in writing.

7.7 Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Denefield School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an apology
- 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.

7.8 Serial and unreasonable complaints

We will do all we can to help to resolve a complaint against the school but sometimes it is not possible to do so.

If you persist in making representations to the school this can be extremely time-consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in our care. In this case, the school leadership team and Trust Board are able to enact our Serial and unreasonable complaints policy in order to manage the situation, particularly when these are having an adverse effect upon the ability of staff to conduct their day-to-day roles. We recommend that you read our Serial and unreasonable complaints policy in conjunction with this policy. We may take action as set out in the policy, including limiting communications, where complaints are considered to be unreasonable.

8. Stages

The procedure is divided into 4 stages.

Informal stage (Stage 1) aims to resolve the concern/complaint through informal means at the appropriate level in school.

Formal stage (Stage 2) is where written complaints are considered by:

- the Headteacher or Deputy Head Teacher, or
- if the complaint is against the Headteacher, the designated Trustee who has special responsibility for dealing with complaints, or
- where appropriate, an Independent Investigating Officer.

Formal Appeal stage (Stage 3) is the last school-based stage, which involves a Complaints Panel of Trustees to review how the investigation has been conducted.

External Appeal stage (Stage 4). Once a complaint has been through all internal stages of the complaints procedure, if you remain unsatisfied with the way in which the matter has been handled you can contact the Department for Education (DfE).

8.1 Stage 1 Informal stage

Many concerns or complaints will be dealt with informally when they are made known to the school. The first point of contact is the member of staff most directly involved.

Once a concern or complaint is made known to us, we will either arrange a meeting or make contact with you by telephone or in writing, as soon as possible. All members of staff know how to refer to the appropriate person in school, if this is necessary. This person will make clear notes of the details and will check later to make sure that the matter has been followed up.

Any actions or monitoring of the situation that have been agreed will be communicated clearly to you. If necessary, we will contact the appropriate people who may be able to assist us with our enquiries into your concern/complaint.

If the matter is brought to the attention of the Headteacher, they may decide to deal with it directly rather than refer the matter back to the teacher.

We will normally provide you with the outcome within **10 school days**.

If you are dissatisfied following the informal approach, your concern/complaint will become a formal complaint, and we will deal with it at Stage 2.

8.2 Stage 2 Formal stage

We request that formal complaints are put in writing. A form is provided for this at (Appendix 1) that we ask you to fill in.

Normally, your written complaint should be addressed to the Headteacher. If, however, your complaint concerns the Headteacher personally, it should be sent to the Governance professional to Trustees (at GovPro@denefield.org.uk) marked "for the attention of the Chair of Trustees".

If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law. You will be advised that such complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with you.

Your complaint will be acknowledged (by letter or email) within **5 school days**. A copy of the school's complaints policy and procedure will be sent with the letter. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint.

Normally we would expect to respond in full within **20 school days** but if this is not possible, we will write to explain the reason for the delay and let you know when we hope to be able to provide a full response.

Formal proceedings will be conducted by an Investigating Officer. This will be typically one of the following:

- the Headteacher or the member of staff the Headteacher has delegated this to
- the Chair of Trustees, if the complaint is against a Trustee or the Headteacher
- another Trustee if delegated by the Chair of Trustees
- the Vice Chair of Trustees, if the complaint is against the Chair of Trustees
- if appropriate to the circumstances, for example if the complaint is against more than one Trustee, an Independent Investigating Officer designated by either the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees.

As part of our consideration of your complaint, we may invite you to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any details required. This will help us to ensure that we fully understand your complaint and can investigate appropriately. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to help you explain the reasons for your complaint. The Investigating Officer may also be accompanied by an appropriate person if they wish.

Following the meeting, the Investigating Officer will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, we will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question.

We will normally talk to pupils and take statements and we will ensure that another member of staff, with whom the pupil feels comfortable, is present if required.

The Investigating Officer will keep written/typed, signed and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation.

Once we have established all the relevant facts, we will send you a written response to your complaint. The Investigating Officer will indicate if your complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. The letter will give an explanation of the Investigating Officer's findings and decision and the reasons for it. If follow-up action is needed, we will indicate what we are proposing to do. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Denefield School will take to resolve the complaint. We may invite you to a meeting to discuss the outcome as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations with you.

If you are unhappy with the way in which we reached our conclusions, you may wish to proceed to a Formal Appeal, Stage 3.

8.3 Stage 3 Formal Appeal stage

If the complaint has been through Stage 2 and you are dissatisfied with the outcome and wish to take the matter further, you can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a meeting with the Trust Board's Complaints Panel. It is important to note that a Stage 3 panel is only likely to come to a different conclusion to that reached at Stage 2 if one or more of the following is the case:

- The procedures outlined in the Stage 2 formal stage above were not correctly followed
- Evidence was available at the time of the Stage 2 formal stage, but it was not fully or appropriately considered
- The relevant school or other policies and procedures were not appropriately considered as part of the Stage 2 formal stage
- The Stage 2 formal stage decision was so perverse that it could not have been reached by any reasonable person

We request that Stage 3 Formal Appeal Stage requests are put in writing with the reasons for the appeal. A form is provided for this at (Appendix 2) that we ask you to fill in.

This is a formal process and is the final internal stage of the complaint's procedure.

You may attend the hearing as parents/carers and be accompanied by another person if you wish. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate for any parties. Alternatively, if you do not wish to attend in person you may provide a written representation. 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. Media representatives are not permitted to attend.

The purpose of this arrangement is to give you the chance to present your arguments in front of a panel who have no prior knowledge of the details of the case and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.

The purpose of a panel is not to rehear the complaint. Its task is:

- to review how the complaint has been investigated,
- to determine whether this has been conducted fairly,
- to establish facts, and
- to make recommendations which will reassure you that we have taken the complaint seriously.

If you intend to progress to the Formal Appeal Stage, you are required to notify the Governance professional to Trustees (at GovPro@denefield.org.uk) within **10 school days** of the response received at Stage 2. The Governance professional to Trustees will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **5 school days.** Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The complaints panel will consist of at least three members with no prior involvement in or knowledge of the complaint. One member of the panel will be an independent

member who is not involved in the management or running of the school (they will not a trustee) but they may be a governor from another school. An experienced member will act as the chair of the panel. The Chair of Trustees will recommend members for the panel. If the circumstances warrant it, an entirely independent panel may be convened to hear the complaint.

If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees; the majority of the Trust Board; or entire Trust Board then stage 3 will be heard by a completely independent panel. You are entitled to a fair review and can request an independent panel if you believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. You should provide us with evidence of bias in support of their request and we will decide whether to agree to it. Persons who have a conflict of interest must not take part in the complaints process. If there is any reasonable doubt as to a person's ability to act impartially, they should withdraw from considering the complaint.

The Governance professional will aim to convene a panel meeting within **20 school days** of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Governance professional to Trustees will provide an anticipated date and keep you informed. If none of three proposed dates offered are accepted, without good reason, the Governance professional to Trustees will decide when to hold the panel meeting. It will then proceed in your absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The Governance professional to Trustees will write to you as follows:

- to inform you, **at least 7 school days** in advance, of the date, time and venue for the meeting. The Governance professional will ensure that as far as possible the dates are convenient to all parties and the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- to distribute to all relevant parties in writing **at least 7 school days** before the date of the meeting: an agenda, the original complaint, any additional papers from the complainant, the investigator's report, a copy of the school's complaints policy and procedure and copies of any other relevant school policies.
- to explain that you have the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint and that these must be received **at least 5 school days** before the meeting.
- to explain that you may bring someone along to provide support and that you must confirm their details to the Governance professional **at least 3 school days** before the meeting. The complaints panel operates according to the following formal procedure:

  The panel will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints should be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

- The Investigating Officer will be invited to attend the panel meeting and will be asked to present a written report in response to the complaint for the panel. The

Investigating Officer is permitted to call any relevant witnesses, as they see fit.

- The panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.
- During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:
  - the panel to hear you explain your case and your argument for why it should be heard at Stage 3
  - the panel to hear the Investigating Officer's case in response
  - you to raise questions via the chair
  - you to be questioned by the Investigating Officer through the chair
  - the panel members to be able to question you and the Investigating Officer and
  - you and the Headteacher/Investigating Officer to make a final statement.
- The Chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.
- The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless you have a disability or special needs which 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.
- In closing the meeting, the Chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision, and that written notice of the decision will be sent to you and the Headteacher within **10 school days**. All participants other than the panel and the Governance professional will then leave.
- The panel will then consider the complaint, and all the evidence presented in order to:
  - reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision either to **uphold** the complaint in whole or in part or **dismiss** the complaint in whole or in part
  - decide on the appropriate action to be taken, if any and
  - recommend, where appropriate, to the Trust Board changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again
- The Governance professional will send you and the Headteacher a letter outlining the decision of the panel. The letter will also explain that you are entitled to escalate your complaint to the Department for Education if you remain dissatisfied.

  The school will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the school's records but separate from pupils' personal records.

9. Recording Complaints

The panel will make findings and recommendations at stage 3 above and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be provided to you and, where relevant, the person complained about; and will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher.

The school will make this complaints procedure available on its website. It will ensure that anyone who requests it is sent a copy of this policy and details of the number of complaints dealt with under the formal procedure during the preceding academic year.

A written record will be kept of all complaints and at what stage of the procedure they are resolved (in particular whether resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing). For monitoring purposes, the Headteacher will report to the Trust Board via the Standards Committee regarding the number and nature of complaints on a termly basis.

The School will keep records of the following information:

- Date when the complaint was raised
- Names of parent/pupil
- Description of the complaint
- Records of the investigations
- Witness statements
- Name of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint regardless of whether upheld
- Copies of all correspondence

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State for Education or a body conducting an inspection under s109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access.

10. Stage 4 External stage

Where you have been through all the internal stages of the school's complaints procedure and are still unhappy with the outcome, you can contact the Department of Education (DfE). You are entitled to do this if you feel that the school has not handled your complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or has acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of its duties under education law.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints but will consider whether Denefield School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

If the DfE upholds a complaint, then it will not overturn the decision taken by the school. It may do one or both of the following:

- Ask the school to reconsider the complaint from an appropriate stage; and/or
- Ask the school to change its complaints procedure so that it complies with legal requirements.

Please use the following link to find further information on how to make a complaint to DfE How DfE handles complaints about academies - GOV.UK Complaints need to be made via the online form. Please enclose with your submission to DfE a copy of the complaint outcome.

11. Review

The Board of Trustees will monitor the nature and frequency of formal complaints. The Headteacher will report to the Trust Board on a termly basis. This policy will be evaluated in the light of complaints made and their resolution in order to contribute to School improvement.

Appendix 1 Complaint Form – Stages 1 and 2

Please complete and return to Headteacher/Governance professional to Trustees who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. For further information on how to make a complaint, please refer to:

How DfE handles complaints about academies - GOV.UK

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Contact 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.
Date and signature:
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Appendix 2 Complaint Form – Stage 3

Please complete and return to Governance professional to Trustees who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. For further information on how to make a complaint, please refer to: How DfE handles complaints about academies - GOV.UK

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Contact Number:**
Please give details of why you wish to take this complaint to Stage 3

Which of the following do you think apply? Please briefly explain ○ The procedures outlined in the Stage 2 formal stage above were not correctly followed ○ Evidence was available at the time of the Stage 2 formal stage, but it was not fully or appropriately considered ○ The relevant school or other policies and procedures were not appropriately considered as part of the Stage 2 formal stage ○ The Stage 2 formal stage decision was so perverse that it could not have been reached by any reasonable person
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Date and signature:
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
- 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 head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The head teacher 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

Each complaint is overseen by a complaints co-ordinator who is either a member of the senior leadership team or a trustee.

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- liaise with staff members, head teacher, Chair of Trustees or the Governance professional and to ensure the smooth running of the complaint's procedure
- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the 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

In addition, the trustee complaints co-ordinator should analyse complaints data from formal stage 2 and formal stage 3 complaints and report to the Trust Board as appropriate

Governance professional to the Trust Board

The Governance professional is the contact point for the complainant for any complaint at Stage 3 (panel hearing), or Stage 2, if the complaint is about the headteacher.

- 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 2 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 Governance professional) 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 Governance professional (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 trustee 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.