

This policy was written using guidance provided by Camden Local Authority (Model Complaints 2019), the LDBS (Complaints Policy and Procedure – Guidelines for Governors, 2019) and the DfE Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures (2019). It meets the statutory requirements that Governing Bodies of all schools are required to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints (Education Act 2002) and that this procedure should be publicised (Freedom of Information Act 2000).

This policy was written by the Governing Body and Head teacher in order to provide an open, consistent and fair system for dealing with complaints made by parents, pupils (through their parents), visitors or others who have dealings with school.

Introduction: Vision, values and principles underpinning this policy

This is the agreed vision statement of Christ Church School:



Christ Church School, Hampstead

A village school in London inspiring *life in all its fullness*

Jesus, The Good Shepherd, promises 'life in all its fullness'. (JOHN 10:10)

At Christ Church we believe every child and adult in our school should be able both to experience life in all its fullness now and to aspire to life in all its fullness in the future.

We all seek to inspire life in all its fullness for all in the school through:

- ensuring a **safe, welcoming and inclusive environment** for children and adults, where everyone is valued and has the opportunity to contribute and flourish;
- the pursuit of **academic excellence** in all areas, with a determined desire for each child to make the best possible progress as a result of high aspirations, hard work and the development of a personal love for learning alongside the highest-quality teaching and support;
- offering the widest possible **breadth of curriculum** both within school and through extra-curricular activities, enriched by the vast range of opportunities locally and across London;
- **creativity and positivity** in all we do, mixing innovation with tradition;
- planned and spontaneous opportunities for **spiritual development** through reflection, discussion and harnessing curiosity, as well as the provision, at the heart of our school life, of daily opportunities for prayer and worship;
- the development and modelling of **strong, positive and loving relationships**, with peers, amongst the school community and in the wider community;
- the promotion of **respect and compassion for ourselves and for all others**, by cultivating positive emotional and physical well-being, by celebrating the diversity within and outside our school and by encouraging all of us to be empowered global citizens, guided at all times by the example of Christ's compassion alongside the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- engendering a **sense of community and responsibility** for others and for our local and global environment and enjoying working together towards our common goals and expecting and valuing contributions from all.

Our vision comes to life through the school's five shared Christian values of **compassion, creativity, courage, simplicity and community**.

This complaints procedure aims to support our vision for *life in all its fullness* for all by supporting the development and maintenance of strong, positive and loving relationships and the promotion of respect and compassion for all, in particular. Our Christian value of community underpins the principles and aims in this policy.

This procedure also provides a process for holding the school to account for its work in promoting this agreed vision for all.

As a Church of England School, Christian values are at the heart of all we do. We value our relationship with parents and all members of the school and local community. If you have a concern, we want to know about it so that it can be dealt with immediately. Most issues can be dealt with easily and quickly, but to ensure all concerns are handled effectively the Governing Body has adopted this complaints policy and procedure.

This Complaints Procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means;
- be simple to use and understand;
- treat complaints confidentially;
- allow problems to be handled swiftly;
- inform future practice so that a problem is unlikely to recur;
- ensure that the school's attitude to a pupil will never be affected by a parental complaint;
- discourage anonymous complaints;
- actively encourage strong home-school links;
- ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint;
- reaffirm the partnership between parents, staff and governors as we work together for the good of the pupils in the school;
- be regularly reviewed.

A school is a busy place where there are many interactions between pupils, parents, carers, staff and visitors as part of the everyday life of the school. We have an ethos of respecting the rights of all members of the school community and as part of our curriculum teaching we work to instil this in the children. From time to time something may go wrong, or there may be things that we can do better. Where any concerns are raised we aim to resolve these as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

We know that a willingness to listen to criticism and challenge and to respond positively to these is the sign of an effective and improving organisation. We understand that all members of the school community are entitled to their points of view. Where complaints are upheld we are committed to taking any action to rectify the situation and to prevent any reoccurrence. We recognise that constructive feedback will help our school to improve.

We are committed to investigating and resolving complaints with due urgency and thoroughness, with a consistency of approach and with regard to equal opportunities at all times. We recognise that some people find it difficult to articulate their feelings and concerns and would take steps to allow them to do this. We would always seek to ensure that all parties hold a shared understanding of the nature of the complaint. We recognise that unresolved complaints can result in an unhealthy atmosphere and possible conflict and seek to avoid this at all times.

At Christ Church School, we are committed to resolving concerns in as informal a manner as possible, however we recognise that, in appropriate circumstances, there is a place for the more formal procedures set out in this policy.

Guidance notes

Please read these guidance notes before raising a complaint

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints 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 Christ Church School 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 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.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

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 on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised in the first instance with either the class teacher or the Headteacher. Should the concern be of sufficient seriousness or be unlikely to be resolved informally, the Headteacher may respond under Stage 1 of this procedure. We resolve most concerns informally but if the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

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

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.

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 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.

Anonymous complaints

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

Timescales

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.

Complaints received outside 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 Christ Church School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admissions to schools	Admissions to schools are covered by the Admissions Appeals Code.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs	Concerns about statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs with the London Borough of Camden or your home borough as appropriate.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School re-organisation proposals 	Concerns about school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the London Borough of Camden.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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). Camden Duty LADO can be contacted by calling 020 7974 3317 or LBCMASHadmin@camden.gov.uk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions . <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers using school premises or facilities 	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly. This does not apply to extra-curricular provision arranged and offered by the school, but delivered by an external provider.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content 	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

Legal considerations

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 Christ Church 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.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Christ Church 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 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
- access to mediation.

Withdrawal of a complaint

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

Stages in the complaints procedure

Informal

Most concerns about the school can be resolved by class teachers or other appropriate members of staff, in an informal manner. Staff at Christ Church should always respond courteously to concerns, give ample time to listen to them, take these concerns seriously and act quickly. There is no need at this stage for any written record to be made, by the complainant or member of staff, though it is good practice for staff to make a note of any communication with parents.

Examples of opportunities at Christ Church School for concerns to be raised in this way include conversations between staff and parents in the playground before or after school, meetings set up by staff or parents to discuss concerns in more depth and parents evenings. The Head teacher is also available to meet with parents or others in the wider community, either informally before or after school or by making an appointment. Staff should always be willing to make an appointment to meet with anyone with a concern to give more time to discussion. It may be helpful to identify at this point what sort of outcome the complainant is looking for in order to tackle minor concerns quickly and effectively.

However, staff should be mindful of where and when they meet and keep in mind their own safety and security at all times.

It may be possible to give a response immediately, but were any investigation or information is required, a response to any concerns will always be given within at least 10 school working days of the initial concern being raised. The response can be oral or in writing, as deemed appropriate to the situation. As part of the response, the complainant may be advised of the next stage of the procedure in case they are not satisfied with the outcome.

If it becomes clear that the complainant is not happy with the response to the concern they have raised or if the member of staff would like the protection of the formal complaints procedure, they should advise the complainant that they should put their complaint in writing and make the complainant aware of this policy. Impartial help (or advice about where to seek help) will be given to record the complaint in writing, where appropriate.

If a complainant wishes to put their complaint in writing and move to the formal stages of the complaints procedure they must do so within ten school working days of receiving any response from the informal stage of the complaints procedure. It is not appropriate for a complaint to be pursued after a long lapse of time.

Formal Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person or in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form). If the complaint is about the Headteacher you should contact the Chair of Governors via the school office.

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days. Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

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

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

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be

accompanied if they wish

- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within twenty 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 Christ Church School will take to resolve the complaint. The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

The aim of our complaints procedure is to reach a resolution for all parties. If, at the conclusion of Stage 1, the complainant remains unsatisfied and wishes to progress to Stage 2, the Chair will consider whether it would be appropriate for the actions in Stage 1 to be repeated by a suitably skilled governor (including the Chair of Governors) prior to the commencement of Stage 2.

Where such a decision is taken, it will ensure either that the complaint can be resolved prior to a Stage 2 hearing or that the Stage 2 hearing has a wider evidence base, with any concerns regarding the school fully reviewed in advance.

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

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

If the complaint is:

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

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

Formal 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. The committee will listen to the complainant, to the headteacher and, if appropriate, any others involved and come to a decision. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within ten school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response. Requests received outside this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within twenty 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 Committee 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 Christ Church 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. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least eight 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. In this case, the school will make appropriate arrangements and 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 Christ Church School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within fifteen 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 Christ Church School.

If the complaint is:

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

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent, co-opted governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions <School Name> will take to resolve the complaint. The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

Social Media

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and as fairly as possible, Christ Church School requests that complainants do not discuss complaints publicly via social media. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also.

Staff conduct complaints

Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. If it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability procedures are necessary in order to resolve the issue, the details of these actions will remain confidential to the head teacher. The complainant is entitled to be informed that action is being taken but they are not entitled to participate in the proceedings or receive any detail about them or their outcome.

Serial and unreasonable complaints

We hope that these procedures will enable complaints and concerns to be resolved amicably. Very occasionally schools experience unreasonable and unacceptable behaviour in relation to complaints or repetition of issues after the complaints procedure has run its course. Christ Church School has adopted the DfE model policy for these circumstances which is attached to this procedure.

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 1: Complaint form – Christ Church School, Hampstead

Please complete and return to the school office

Please refer to our published Complaints Procedure for further guidance and information

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:

School use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix 2: Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Christ Church 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.

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

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Christ Church 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 Christ Church School.

Appendix 3: 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 and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

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

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

Complaints Co-ordinator (at Christ Church School this is the headteacher or Clerk to the Governors as appropriate)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information
 - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

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

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