



Complaints Policy

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Introduction

Everychild Partnership Trust has agreed this Policy and as such, it applies to all schools within Everychild Partnership Trust ("the Trust").

At Everychild Partnership Trust, we are a learning community which inspires, empowers and develops schools to prepare every child for success in life. Sharing our strengths ensures that our communities grow and prosper and that we have opportunities to support and learn through each other to create futures for all. We welcome feedback from pupils, parents/carers and others, and we accept not all of this will be positive.

Where concerns are raised the school will deal with them fairly, openly, promptly and without prejudice.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints policy is based upon [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#). In addition, it addresses duties set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage Framework](#) with regards to dealing with complaints about the Academy's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements. It only applies to complaints from parents/carers of pupils at this school, regarding their child.

Complaints from people who are not parents/carers of a child at the school will be dealt with respectfully and expediently, however there is no obligation to follow the full procedure.

The policy also takes into account 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 complaints procedures from the DfE.

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 complaint's procedure. The Trust/School's takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, we will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, we will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the Trust/School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint's procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or informal complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. In most cases, a concern should initially be raised with the Class Teacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint in writing using the Complaints Form (Appendix 1).

If a concern, or difficulty is raised with a member of staff who feels that it contains serious issues which should be dealt with as a formal complaint immediately, the member of staff will tell the Complainant that they should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher under Stage 2 of this Complaints Policy. The Complainant will complete the Complaint Form contained in Appendix 1 of this Complaints Policy to submit their complaint formally.

Complainants should not approach individual governors or trustees 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 3 (Panel) of the procedure.

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 Clerk to the Governing Body 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".

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a trustee of the Trust, should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees, via the trust office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

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

Anonymous complaints

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

School working days

School working days do not include INSET days. A school working day is considered to end at **4pm**. Therefore, any notification received after this time is considered to be received on the following school working day.

Pausing a complaint

Where a complaint is raised but we do not have clarity from the complainant on the issues, we may pause the timescales of the complaints process whilst clarity is sought, so that the complaint can be dealt with effectively. If this happens, we will inform the complainant of a proposed new timescale.

Complaints received outside of term time

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

Audio or video evidence

Complainants should make sure they obtain informed consent from all parties present before recording conversations or meetings. In line with DfE guidance, we do not normally accept electronic recordings as evidence when we are asked to consider a complaint. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, we will not accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without informed consent of all parties being recorded.

Virtual meetings

To accommodate differing circumstances, there may be occasions where it is deemed appropriate to hold a complaint-related meeting virtually.

Deviation from the procedure

There may be occasions when it's necessary or reasonable to deviate from the published complaints procedure. In these cases, the complainant will be kept informed and reasons for the deviation explained.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority
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). Surrey Schools: LADO – 0300 123 1650 option 3 MASH – cspa@surreycc.gov.uk 0300 470 9100/01483 517898 (out of hours) West Sussex Schools: LADO – 0330 222 6450 MASH – WSChildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk 01403 229900/0330 222 6664 (out of hours)
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>
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. 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.
Complaints regarding the breach of Data Protection rights.	The process for complaints regarding the breach of Data Protection Rights can be found in the Trust's Data Protection (including SAR) Policy

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 this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against the Trust/School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the Trust/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.

Withdrawal of a complaint

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

Stage 1 – Informal complaints

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.

The school will take concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue. The complainant should raise the concern or informal complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff who will, in most instances, be the class teacher, either in person, or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact, or how to contact them, they should contact the school office.

The informal stage may involve a meeting between the complainant and the Class Teacher.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a Stage 2 formal complaint using the Complaints Form (Appendix 1).

Stage 2 – Formal complaint

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint in writing, to the Headteacher.

The Complainant will complete the Complaint Form contained in Appendix 1 of this Complaints Policy to submit their complaint formally. This should provide details such as relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If a parent requires support in writing the complaint, they should contact the school office who will be willing to assist.

The school will acknowledge the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days. The Headteacher (or other person appointed by the Headteacher for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, this stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and the Headteacher (the Headteacher may delegate this to another member of staff. The member of staff may be senior, but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important). The meeting will be to discuss their concern further and obtain additional information, or clarify the resolution they are seeking.

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within twenty school days.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another staff member, but not 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.

If invited to attend the meeting, those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. It is not appropriate for either the complainant, or the school, to be legally represented. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within twenty school days of the date of the complaint being received.

If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the 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 2 (Formal).

If the complaint is about the headteacher, or a member of the governing body, or trust board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor, or trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

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”.

Complaints about the Chair of the Trust Board, any individual Trustee, or the whole Trust Board, should be addressed to the Clerk to the Trust Board via the school office. Please mark them as “Private and Confidential”.

If the complaint is:

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

Stage 2 (formal) will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body, or trust board.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure Stage 3, they should inform the chair of governors in writing and via the clerk within ten school days of receipt of the outcome, clearly setting out how and why they do not accept the findings made under Stage 2. The complainant should not repeat matters raised in their original letter, or attach documentation already provided. Furthermore, the complainant should not introduce any new complaint, trivial or irrelevant information, which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on.

Stage 3 – Panel Review

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 (formal) and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – 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 complaint's procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk of the Governing Body, via the school office, within ten school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

The school will acknowledge the complaint within five school days in writing (either by letter or email). 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 twenty school days of receipt of the Stage 3 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 panel will be appointed by, or on behalf of, the school/Trust and must consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one panel member must be independent of the leadership and running of the school. The panel cannot be made up solely of governing board members of the school to which the complaint relates, as they are not independent of the leadership and running of the school.

The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress. The committee will then deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting. The meeting may be held in person, virtually, or by hybrid, but in making this decision 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. It is not appropriate for either the complainant, or the school, to be legally represented. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaint's procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

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. At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The Complaint panel will then convene in private immediately after, or on a subsequent date and will consider all the documentation and everything heard at the Panel Hearing.

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 either Stage 1 (informal) or Stage 2 (formal) 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 the school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within ten school days from the date of the panel hearing.

If the complaint is:

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

Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of members independent of the running of the school. In the case of complaints against the Trust, the committee will be formed of members independent of running the trust.

The panel must then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. It will decide which facts are established to be true, on a balance of probabilities. If a fact is not deemed relevant, the panel will not consider it further. The panel will send an outcome letter with a copy of the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint and the school's representative. A copy will be made available on the schools' premises for inspection by the Trust.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the Trust/School.

Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

The Trust/Schools are 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.

The Trust/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 complaint's investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- The complainant is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience
- 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 or personal comments to intimidate
- uses abusive, aggressive, 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 Trust/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 considering an 'unreasonable' marking. In the case where a Headteacher or Chair of Governors wish to apply an 'unreasonable' marking, they should discuss this with the Chief Executive who will seek approval from the Chair of Trustees.

Where the Chair of Trustees judges a complaint to be serial or persistent, they will agree appropriate action with the Chief Executive and Headteacher, which may include rejecting the complaint and/or restricting contact between the complainant and the school. For complainants who excessively contact the school, 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. This marking will be against the subject or complaint itself, rather than the complainant.

Once the decision is agreed by the Chair of Trustees, the Headteacher will write to the complainant and explain this decision and the reasons for it and what action will follow, if applicable.

Where a complainant seeks to reopen a matter which is the same as, or similar to, a matter previously considered under the procedure, the Chair of Trustees has the right to inform him/her, via the Headteacher that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed.

The Department for Education and Everychild Partnership Trust do not use the term 'vexatious' when dealing with serial or persistent correspondents. However, it is a recognised term. In the context of Freedom of Information requests, 'vexatious' could be defined as the '...manifestly unjustified, inappropriate or improper use of a formal procedure.' An exemption therefore exists in Section 14(1) of the FOI Act. However, this exemption can only be applied to requests themselves, and not the individuals who submit them.

Any person who is being investigated for, or who has been determined to have engaged in vexatious or serial complaints against the school will not be permitted to stand for election to, or appointment to any part of the school's governance structure (e.g. board of trustees or members) or affiliated groups (e.g. Parent and Friends Association). This is to ensure that each part of the school's day to day activities are performed in line with the Nolan Principles of Public Life (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>), the governors' code of conduct and the school's values.

More information about dealing with vexatious requests for information is available on the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website.

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 consideration of barring an individual from the school.

Procedure for managing complaint campaigns

In the rare event that the school receives a large volume of complaints all based on the same subject, from complainants unconnected with the school, we will either send a template response to all complainants or publish a single response on the school's website.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the School / Trust 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 ESFA after they have completed Stage 3.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the School / Trust. They will consider whether the School / Trust has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
5 Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2W

Appendix 1 – Stage 2 (formal) Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the 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 action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (for example, who did you speak to and what was the response)? 		
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 received:	Date Acknowledgement sent:	Complaint referred to:

Appendix 2 – 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.

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.