

# Complaints Policy

September 2023/2024



TO BE REVIEWED SEPTEMBER 2024

## Who can make a complaint?

**This complaints policy and procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children who are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may complain to RODMERSHAM SCHOOL about any provision of facilities or services 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 '*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 as soon as possible. Many issues can be resolved informally without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint procedure. RODMERSHAM takes concerns seriously and will try to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

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

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

## How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person by parents, carers (including parents or carers of children no longer at the school) and public members, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

**Concerns** should be raised with the class teacher/form tutor/head of the year in the first instance. At this stage, informal mediation may be offered. While this can be useful in helping the school and complainants reach an agreement and move forward, there are times when it may not be the most appropriate course of action.

Mediation can:

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

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

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

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to complain formally.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act individually, which may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance to [NICKY MCMULLON](#) (HEAD TEACHER) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints involving or about the headteacher should be addressed to [DAVID ROCHE](#) (the Chair of Governors, care of the complaints co-ordinator) 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 [NICKY MCMULLON](#) or [FRANCES FLATT](#) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

A template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure for ease of use. 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, we could provide information in alternative formats, assist complainants in raising a formal complaint, or hold meetings in accessible locations.

## **Anonymous complaints**

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

## **Time scales**

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. If exceptional circumstances apply, we will consider complaints made outside of this time frame.

## **Complaints received outside of term time**

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

## Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about RODMERSHAM SCHOOL's provision of community facilities or services 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"> <li>• Admissions to schools</li> <li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>• School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul>	<p>For concerns about admissions please see the School's Admissions Policy or contact Kent County Council Admissions team</p> <p>Special Educational Needs: The Complainant can use this policy to complain unless the Complainant's child has an Education Health and Care Plan and the Complainant wishes to appeal against a decision that the Local Authority has taken. If this is the case, the Complainant needs to contact the Local Authority</p> <p>School re-organisation proposals should be raised with the KCC Contact Centre 01622 671411</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom of Information</li> </ul>	<p>Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests: please see the School's Data Protection and Freedom of Information Policies</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure. &lt;link to school behaviour policy&gt;.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>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. <i>&lt;school should check that their Whistleblowing Policy matches the guidance referenced in this policy&gt;</i> Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p>

	<p>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.</p> <p>Anonymous complaints: Please refer to the School's Whistleblowing Policy</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances</li> </ul>	<p>Staff grievance, capability or disciplinary; these are covered by separate School Policies and Procedures</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>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.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Curriculum - content</li> </ul>	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a></p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, such as the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams, or Tribunals, this may impact 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 [Rodmersham School](#) in relation to their complaint, we will suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

If a complainant contacts [Rodmersham School](#) again regarding their complaint, the correspondence may be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent', and [Rodmersham School](#) will not respond but will continue to complete the initial complaints procedure in full.

## Duplicate complaints

After closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, if the school receive a duplicate complaint from:

- a spouse
- a partner
- a grandparent

- a child

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

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

## Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, **RODMERSHAM** 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

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

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 5 school days.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint and 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 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.

After their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within 14 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the headteacher cannot 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 explain the decision and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions RODMERSHAM will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise the complainant on how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

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 DAVID ROCHE , 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 may be considered by a suitably skilled and impartial Governing body member. If there are no suitably qualified and impartial members it could be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the clerk on behalf of the governing body or depending on the nature of the complaint. After their investigation, the chosen investigating body will provide a formal written response to the complainant and governing body.

## Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three impartial governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to NICKY MCMULLON OR ALISON PRESDEE COLLEY via the school office within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

NICKY MCMULLON OR FRANCES FLATT will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 school days.

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

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the meeting date. They aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receiving the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and inform the complainant.

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 based on written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors without prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Before the meeting, they will decide who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from [RODMERSHAM](#) available, the Clerk will source any additional independent governors through another locally maintained school, local governing board members, governors and trustees from within academies or multi-academy trusts, or associate members of another governing body.

Alternatively, an independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2. Complainants can request an independent complaints committee if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. In support of their request, complainants should provide the Clerk with evidence of bias. The Governing Body will err on the side of caution if the appearance of bias may be sufficient to taint any decision reached.

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

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

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

The Department for Education recognises there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate; for instance, if a school employee is called a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

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

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least **10** school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- Confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- Request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least **7** school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least **5** school days before the meeting date. The committee will not usually 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 generally not permitted unless a complainant's disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations occur. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken. Schools are data controllers in their own right and have the discretion via their policies to decide for themselves whether to allow complainants to record meetings if it's not required for a reasonable adjustment.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

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

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way Rodmersham School has handled their Complaint, along with copies of the minutes.

If the complaint is:

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

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors convened by the clerk from either impartial members of the GB or from another locally maintained school, local governing board members and governors/trustees from within academies or multi-academy trusts (academy governors should seek guidance and understanding from the clerk on the different legislative framework that may need to be taken into consideration during the complaint's hearing at the appeal stage), an associate member of another governing body or from an entirely independent committee. The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint

- where appropriate, recommend changes to systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will write to the complainant and RODMERSHAM SCHOOL within 15 school days and explain fully their decision and the reason(s) for it.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way RODMERSHAM SCHOOL has handled their complaint, along with copies of the minutes.

## **Complaint campaigns**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Next Steps**

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn RODMERSHAM SCHOOL's decisions. Instead, it will consider whether RODMERSHAM 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](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD.

## **Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints**

RODMERHSAM SCHOOL is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. Anyone has the right to raise a new complaint at any time. We will not usually limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines unreasonable complaints as '*those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints*'.

**Examples: A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:**

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that specific issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their 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 adequately implemented and completed, including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequently, lengthy, complicated, and stressfully contacting staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email, and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

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

- maliciously;

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

Complainants should limit the number of communications with a school while a complaint is being processed. 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, including suggesting that the complainant asks a third party to act on their behalf, such as the local Citizen's Advice.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school, causing significant disruption, we may specify methods of communication (such as restricting the complaint to a single point of contact via an email address) and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.

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

## **Barring from the School Premises**

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

If an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask him/her to leave the school premises. In severe cases, the Headteacher or the local authority can notify them in writing that their implied licence on school premises has been temporarily revoked, subject to any representations that the person may wish to make. Schools should always allow that person to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing. Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so by letter or email to the Chair of Governors. The decision to bar should then be reviewed, considering any representations, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed, the person should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place and when the decision will be reviewed, usually after 6 months.

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

## Concern Form

Please complete and return to [HEADTEACHER, NICKY MCMULLON OR RODMERSHAM SCHOOL](#) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

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

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Concern referred to:**

**Date:**

## Complaint Form

Please complete and return to [NICKY MCMULLON](#) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

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

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**



## Roles and Responsibilities

### Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

### 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 (

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 informally, 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
- everyone sees written material 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 allow everyone to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- both the complainant and the school are allowed 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 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 work 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 is not 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 allow the parent 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.