



Learn-AT

Learning ~ Fellowship

Complaints Policy

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Please note that this policy supersedes and replaces any equivalent policies or sections of policies. This policy is non contractual and can therefore be amended without consultation. Before you use this policy, please check you have the latest version using the footer reference and Learn-AT Policy Index.

This policy applies to all Learn Academies Trust schools and should be read in conjunction with the latest associated guidance issued by Learn-AT.

1. Scope

- 1.1. This policy applies to any matter which has been raised with an academy by parents of pupils as a matter of concern, but which has not been capable of resolution informally and which the complainant or the academy considers should be dealt with on a formal basis.
- 1.2. **NB.** *Usually matters relating to admissions and exclusions, statutory SEN assessments, matters involving child protection involvement, will not be considered as they have their own appeal or complaint processes. Where necessary the Academy will exercise its discretion. Whistleblowing and staff grievances and discipline matters will not be considered under this policy.*
- 1.3. This policy must be made available to parents of pupils.
- 1.4. For the avoidance of doubt this policy does not apply to those who are not parents of pupils at an Academy within the Trust. Complaints that fall into this category will be dealt with as follows:
 - 1.4.1. Complainants should first attempt to address their complaint to the Academy or Trust (as appropriate) informally. Only if this fails to resolve the situation should the complaint be submitted in writing to the Head Teacher, (if the complaint is about the Academy in general) or to the CEO, (if the complaint is about the Head Teacher specifically). The Headteacher (or CEO - as appropriate) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint before considering it and issuing a final written response.

2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

- 2.1. A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.
- 2.2. A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.
- 2.3. 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. [Learn Academies Trust](#) takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.
- 2.4. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we

will respect your views. In these cases, [and](#) will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, [the school or Trust](#) will refer you to another staff member, who may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

- 2.5. We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, [we](#) will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

3. How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

- 3.1. A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone, and may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.
- 3.2. All complaints should be marked as Private and Confidential.
- 3.3. Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher or Executive Headteacher) should be made in the first instance to [the Headteacher or Executive Headteacher](#) via the school office.
- 3.4. Any complaint relating to the Head of School of the academy must be raised in the first instance with the Executive Headteacher of the related academy who will, if an informal resolution cannot be reached, designate a member of the Local Governing Body to investigate the complaint in accordance with the procedure outlined in **Stage 3 of this policy**.
- 3.5. Any complaint relating to a Headteacher, Executive Headteacher, the CEO of the Trust or Trustee of the Trust must be raised in the first instance with the Chair of the Trust Board who will, if an informal resolution cannot be reached, designate either a member of the Local Governing Body of another Learn-AT school or a member of the Board of Trustees to investigate the complaint in accordance with the procedure in **Stage 3 of this policy**.
- 3.6. Complaints about the Chair of the local governing body, any individual local governor or the whole local governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Local Governing Body via the school office.
- 3.7. 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 a third-party organisation for example like the Citizens Advice to help you.
- 3.8. 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.

4. Anonymous Complaints

- 4.1. Where a complaint is made anonymously, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

5. Time Scales

- 5.1. Complaints must be made within three months of the incident, or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. Complaints made outside of this time frame may be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
 - 1.1. 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.

6. Complaints Received Outside Term Time

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

7. Resolving complaints

- 1.1. At each stage in the procedure, [we will do our best](#) to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we may 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.

8. Withdrawing a Complaint

- 8.1. The complainant may withdraw their complaint at any stage of this process and must confirm this in writing.

9. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- 9.1. It is preferable for all concerned to resolve complaints informally and as early as possible. In most cases, misunderstandings or miscommunications can be resolved through constructive dialogue. Generally, it is expected that where the matter relates to a pupil it will have been raised with the pupil's Class Teacher before a request is made to deal with it under this policy. If a matter is not resolved at the informal stage, then a complainant may take it to the formal stage.
- 9.2. It is a precondition to the operation of this policy that the complainant shall have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution and shall have acted in relation to the matter in a reasonable and measured way consistent with the individual academy's behaviour policy adopted from time to time. The Chair of the Board of Trustees shall have a discretion, which will be exercised reasonably, not to allow a complaint to be pursued where this precondition has not been met.
- 1.2. Where the matter is not resolved at the informal stage, the parent may elevate it to the formal stage.

10. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution at Local Level: Investigation by a Nominated Individual

- 10.1. The complainant must put the complaint in writing, addressed to the Executive Headteacher or Headteacher of the academy, setting out briefly the facts and stating what it is that the complainant considers should have been done or where the academy has not met reasonable expectations.
- 10.2. An investigation will be carried out by a nominated individual identified by the Executive Headteacher or Headteacher, who may offer the complainant a meeting. The investigator will speak to others involved. Whenever reasonably possible, any meeting with the complainant will take place within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.
- 10.3. The investigator will put her/his findings in writing and will indicate what steps, if any, should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of any meeting with the complainant; if no meeting is arranged it will be within 25 school days of the written complaint being received.
- 10.4. Where the complainant remains dissatisfied, he may request the complaint is dealt with at Stage 3. Any such request **must** be set out in writing, stating where the complainant remains dissatisfied and lodged within **10** school days of the complainant receiving the findings in writing.
- 10.5. For complaints against members of the Local Governing Body please note the process to follow set out at the end of this policy.

11. Stage 3 – Formal Resolution: Local Governing Body

- 11.1. The complainant must put the complaint in writing, addressed to the Chair of the-

Local Governing Body, c/o the academy concerned. In the case of complaints relating to a Headteacher, Executive Headteacher or CEO, the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees, c/o Learn Academies Trust, Lubenham All Saints Primary School, School Lane, Lubenham, LE16 9TW, setting out briefly the facts and stating what it is that the complainant considers should have been done or where the academy has not met reasonable expectations.

- 11.2. The Chair of the Local Governing Body may appoint a member of the Local Governing Body of the academy concerned, to investigate the complaint. In the case of complaints relating to a Headteacher, Executive Headteacher or CEO, the Chair of the Board of Trustees may appoint either a member of the Local Governing Body of another Learn-AT school or a member of the Board of Trustees to investigate the complaint. The investigation may include the offer of a meeting with the complainant. Whenever reasonably possible, any meeting with the complainant will take place within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.
- 11.3. The investigator will put her/his findings in writing and will indicate what, if any, steps should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of any meeting with the complainant; if no meeting is arranged it will be within 25 school days of the written complaint being received.
- 11.4. Where the complainant remains dissatisfied he may request the complaint is dealt with at Stage 4. Any such request **must** be set out in writing, stating where the complainant remains dissatisfied, what remedies are being sought and be lodged within **10** school days of the complainant receiving the findings in writing. The request must be addressed to Chair of Trustees, c/o Learn Academies Trust, Lubenham All Saints Primary School, School Lane, Lubenham, LE16 9TW.

12. Stage 4 – Formal Resolution: Panel Hearing

- 12.1. The complaints panel of the Trust will consider all complaints at Stage 4.
- 12.2. The complaints panel must comprise at least three people, which will include one person who is independent of the management and running of the trust and any of its academies.
- 12.3. The complaints panel may also include one or more persons from the following categories:
 - A member of the Local Governing Body of the academy where the complaint emanated from;
 - A member of a Local Governing Body from another academy within the trust;
 - A member of the Board of Trustees from the Trust.
- 12.4. None of the members of the complaints panel will have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.
- 12.5. The Chair of the Board of Trustees will invite the Headteacher (in the case of

academy related complaints) or the CEO (in the case of trust related complaints) to put in writing its response to the complainant's reasons for complaint. The Headteacher or CEO will provide this within 15 school days of receiving the request. At the end of that period (whether or not a response has been received) the Chair of the Board of Trustees will convene a meeting of the complaints panel. That meeting will be held in a convenient location as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the Headteacher or CEO and the members of the complaints panel. Whenever possible, the meeting will be held within 15 school days of the end of the required response time. At any meeting, the complainant will be entitled to be accompanied by a friend, but legal representation will not be allowed.

- 12.6. The meeting is not a court case, it will be held in private, and will be as informal as circumstances allow. A clerk may attend to take notes. The complainant will have the opportunity to put her/his reasons for dissatisfaction and to enlarge on them but may not introduce reasons that were not previously put in writing. The academy will have the opportunity to put its side of things and each side, as well as the panel members, will be able to ask questions. The complainant will have the opportunity to make final comments to the panel.
- 12.7. The panel may make findings and recommendations and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be:
 - (i) sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
 - (ii) available for inspection on the academy premises or, in the case of trust related complaints, on the trust premises.
- 12.8. The panel will formulate its response as quickly as reasonably possible, aiming to do so within 10 school days, and the meeting clerk will notify all concerned.

13. Complaint against a member of a Local Governing Body / Chair of a Local Governing Body

- 13.1. Where a complaint is brought against a member of the Local Governing Body, the clerk should arrange for the Chair of the Local Governing Body to investigate the complaint in the same way as in the first stage of the formal process at **Stage 3**. **Stage 2** does not apply.
- 13.2. If the complaint is against the Chair of the Local Governing Body, the entire Local Governing Body or both the Chair and Vice Chair of the Local Governing Body, then the clerk should determine the most appropriate course of action. This may include escalating the complaint to the Trust Board to investigate the complaint and hold the panel hearing. In the case of a complaint about the Chair, the Vice Chair of the Local Governing Body may be asked to investigate the complaint (or appoint another member of the Local Governing Body to do so) in the same way as in the first stage of the formal process at **Stage 3**. **Stage 2** does not apply.

- 13.3. If the complaint is against a member of the Board of Trustees, then the Chair of the trustees, (or in the case of a complaint against the Chair the Vice Chair) will investigate the complaint (or appoint another member of the Board of Trustees to do so) in the same way as in the first stage of the formal process at **Stage 3**. **Stage 2** does not apply.
- 13.4. In exceptional circumstances the Chair of the Board of Trustees may at his or her absolute discretion determine that a complaint against a Headteacher, Executive Headteacher, CEO or member of the Local Governing Body should be dealt with at Board of Trustees level and if so determined, the Chair of the Board of Trustees will oversee **Stage 3**.

14. Complaints escalated to or about the Trust, Trust Leader or a Trustee

- 1.2. If a complaint is escalated to the Trust or if a complainant wishes to complain directly about the Trust, then the complaint should be sent to the Trust Leader to be investigated.
- 1.3. The Trust Leader will write to the complainant acknowledging the complaint within **15 school days** of the date that the written request was received. The acknowledgement will confirm that the complaint will now be investigated under Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy and will confirm the date for providing a response to the complainant.
- 1.4. Following the investigation, the Trust Leader will write to the complainant confirming the outcome within **25 school days** of the date that the letter was received. If this time limit cannot be met, the Trust Leader will write to the Complainant within **25 school days** of the date that the letter was received, explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date.
- 1.5. If the complaint concerns the Trust Leader or a Trustee, the complaint should be investigated by the Chair of the Trust Board. If a formal complaint form is received about the Chair, the complaint will be referred to the Vice Chair for investigation *NB. Where the Chair of the Trust Board has investigated the complaint, they will write the letter of outcome to the Complainant and provide a copy to the Trust Leader.*
- 14.1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the previous stage, the complainant should write to the Clerk to the Trust Board within 10 school days asking for the complaint to be heard before a Complaint Panel.
- 14.2. The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 15 school days.
- 14.3. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
- 14.4. The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the Panel meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 25 school days of receipt of the request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

- 14.5. 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.
- 14.6. If the complaint is:
- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
 - the entire Trust board or
 - the majority of the Trust board
- the complaint will be heard by a completely independent committee panel.
- 14.7. The Complaint Panel will consist of three members. None of the three members of the Complaint Panel will have been involved in the incidents or events which led to the complaint, or have been involved in dealing with the complaint in the previous stages, or have any detailed prior knowledge of the complaint.
- 14.8. One of the Complaint Panel members will be independent of the management and running of the Academy Trust. This means that the independent Complaint Panel member will not be a Trustee or an employee of the Trust.
- 14.9. A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting 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 Trust employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.
- Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.*
- 14.10. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.
- 14.11. 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 5 school days before the meeting.
- 14.12. Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 4 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.
- 14.13. 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.

- 14.14. 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.
- 14.15. 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.
- 14.16. 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.
- 14.17. The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days.
- 14.18. The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Learn Academies Trust.
- 14.19. 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 Trust will take to resolve the complaint.
- 14.20. The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

15. Attendance at a Complaints Panel Hearing

- 15.1. The complaints panel will proceed *irrespective of whether or not* the complainant and/or their representative attend. If the complainant fails to attend on the day without compelling reasons, the complaints panel will *still proceed in their absence and the process will continue to its conclusion*. Any further attempt to re-open the matter will be considered as falling under the serial/persistent complaint section as below.

16. Serial or persistent complainants

- 16.1. If at any level a complainant attempts to reopen an issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the Chair of the Board of Trustees may write to the complainant to inform him/her that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed, that continued

correspondence on the same matter is vexatious and that the trust will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or a closely related issue. Please see the separate Learn-AT Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints or Harassment Policy.

17. Complaints Campaigns

- 17.1. In the event of an individual school, schools or the Trust becoming the focus of a campaign involving a large volume of complaints on the same subject:
 - 17.1.1. Where these complaints are received from complainants unconnected with the school the school/s or Trust will publish a standard, single response on the school or Trust website.
 - 17.1.2. Where the complainants are connected with the school or Trust each complainant will receive an individual response.

18. Record Keeping

- 18.1. A written record will be kept of all complaints that were resolved at the formal stage of the complaints procedure. Records will contain details of whether the complaint was resolved at Stage 2, Stage 3 or whether it proceeded to a Stage 4 panel hearing. The action taken by the academy or the academy trust as a result of a complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld) will also be recorded.

19. Confidentiality

- 19.1. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

20. Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

- 20.1. Once the complaints process is concluded (or a complaint has been terminated due to undue delay or failure to lodge a Stage 3 request within the time stated in the policy) the matter is closed. If the complainant is still not satisfied, then they may contact the ESFA. There is an online procedure at:
<https://form.education.gov.uk>
or you may write to the Ministerial and Public Communications Division,
Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

21. Complaints Relating to Fulfilment of the EYFS Requirements

- 21.1. In order to comply with the statutory framework, written concerns or complaints relating to the fulfilment of the EYFS Requirements will be dealt with in accordance with the following process:
 - The written concern/complaint will be acknowledged within 5 days.

- The Executive Headteacher or Headteacher will investigate the concern or complaint which may include meeting with the complainant and the Head of Early Years. A written response notifying the complainant of the outcome of the investigation will be sent within 28 days of the complaint being received.
- Where the complainant remains dissatisfied, the Headteacher will ensure that a formal complaints panel will be convened in accordance with stage 4 of this policy.

21.2. A record of the written complaints and their outcome will be maintained and made available to Ofsted on request.

21.3. Parents are further advised that where you have concerns regarding the School meeting EYFS requirements they may contact Ofsted on 0300 123 4666.

Appendix 1: Complaint Form

Please complete this form and return it to [the school office](#). You can do this either by email, or by providing a paper copy. Receipt of your complaint will be acknowledged, with an explanation of what action will be taken next.

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

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

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix 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 head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The head teacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, head teacher, CEO, Chair of Governors, Chair of Trust or the Clerk and 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 / Trust Board

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 / trustee may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting

Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.

- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.