

## Heckmondwike Grammar School

**Policy:** Complaints Policy

**Status:** Statutory

**Last revision by:** Finance Director

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**Open view on website:** External

Approved by:	Governing Body
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## HECKMONDWIKE GRAMMAR SCHOOL ACADEMY TRUST

### COMPLAINTS POLICY

#### **Who can make a complaint?**

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Heckmondwike Grammar School Academy Trust (The Trust or the School) about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

#### **The difference between a concern and a complaint**

A complaint may be an informal concern or a formal complaint.

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. The Trust 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, an Assistant Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, an Assistant Headteacher 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 will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

#### **How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. 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. There is a flowchart summarising the process at the end of this policy, but the detail remains within the wording of this document.

If you have a child at school, and you are dissatisfied with the schools provision for the special educational needs or disability of your child, you should in the first instance, contact the SEND Co-ordinator to try and resolve these difficulties informally.

If you have a child at the School and your concern is about the School or education provided, any concerns should be raised with your child's class teacher, head of subject or Head of Year (HoY) in the first instance.

If you do not have a child at the School please raise your concern with an Assistant Headteacher.

Complaints where concerns have not been addressed through discussion with the SEND Co-ordinator, class teacher, head of subject or HoY should be addressed to a Deputy Headteacher.

Complaints where concerns have not been addressed through discussion with an Assistant Headteacher should be addressed to a Deputy Headteacher.

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

Complainants should not approach individual governors, as they have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints at later stages of the process.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors. 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. 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 reception. You can also ask a third-party organisation for example Citizens Advice to help you.

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

### **Anonymous complaints**

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether such a 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. We will only consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

## Complaints received outside of school time

Complaints made at a weekend will be considered to be received on the first school day following the weekend.

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

## Managing serial and unreasonable complaints

The Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with The Trust. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will act to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

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

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

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

Whenever possible, the member of staff dealing with the complaint will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the School.

### Complaint campaigns

Occasionally, the School 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

In response to such complaints, the School may decide to:

- send a template response to all complainants
- publish a single response on the School's website

### Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by The Trust, 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 school</li> </ul>	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – see Admissions Policy on the School's website.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> </ul>	<p>Concerns about statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs should be raised with the Local Authority.</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> <p>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.</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 (copies of which are available on the school website) can be made through the School's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistle Blowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal Whistle Blowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>For whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer, or where the internal route is unsuitable, you may in exceptional circumstances, contact the Department for Education (DfE). 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>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the School's internal grievance 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>

	Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct, unless the service is provided for and on behalf of the school, e.g. catering, in which case please follow this complaints policy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Curriculum (including public examinations and pupil records)</li> </ul>	Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a> .

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 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 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 in a more suitable way
- 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.

## Informal complaints

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

If you have a child at school, and you are dissatisfied with the schools provision for the special educational needs or disability of your child, you should in the first instance, contact the SEND Co-ordinator to try and resolve these difficulties informally.

If you have a child at the School and your concern is about the School or education provided, any concerns should be raised with your child's class teacher, head of subject or Head of Year (HoY) in the first instance.

If you do not have a child at the School please raise your concern with an Assistant Headteacher.

Please contact the relevant person identified above to arrange an initial discussion regarding the concern. In most cases we would expect the concern to be dealt with by phone and resolved at this stage, with no further action required.

In some cases, some limited follow up may be required to address the concerns raised, and there may need to be a face to face or video conference meeting. We would expect any follow up to be completed and the concern resolved within 10 school days of the concern first being raised. An informal written response will be provided by the person dealing with the complaint.

If at this stage, you have not received reassurance over the concern raised please contact one of the Deputy Headteachers, as they may not be aware of the concern raised prior to this point. The Deputy Headteacher should be able to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of all concerned without recourse to the formal complaints procedure. If this does not resolve your concern please follow the following formal complaints procedures.

### **Stage 1 – Formal complaints – dealt with by Assistant Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher**

If you feel that a concern has not been addressed through discussion with the SEND Co-ordinator, a class teacher, subject head or HoY or if your concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, please make a formal complaint to one of the Assistant Headteachers or Deputy Headteachers. Formal complaints can be made in person, by phone or in writing (preferably on the template complaints form included further on in this policy).

If as part of an informal concern the Assistant Headteacher has already been involved please address your complaint to one of the Deputy Headteachers, and if one of the Deputy Headteacher has already been involved please go to the next stage of the formal complaints procedure.

The person dealing with the complaint will record the date the complaint was received and acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 school days, either by letter or email. The response will confirm details of the next steps and timescales.

The person dealing with the complaint will investigate the complaint. As part of the investigation they will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, review what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. They will consider whether a face to face or video conference meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

During the investigation they may interview those involved in the matter and / or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish. The investigator will also keep a written record of any meetings / interviews in relation to the investigation.

Following an investigation the complainant will be provided with a written response within **10** school days of the completion of the investigation. 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.

The Assistant or Deputy Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

## **Stage 2 – Formal complaints –dealt with by Headteacher / Chair of Governors / Clerk to Governing Body**

### *Complaints to the Headteacher:*

Formal complaints not resolved at stage 1 or about individual members of staff (except the Headteacher) must be made to the Headteacher in person, by phone or in writing (preferably on the template complaints form included further on in this policy).

### *Complaints to the Chair of Governors or Clerk to Governing Body:*

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, you must write to the Chair of Governors (please use the complaint template form in this policy).

For complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body you should write to the Clerk to the Governing Body (please use the complaint template form in this policy)

Correspondence for the Chair of Governors or Clerk should be sent to:

Clerk to the Governing Body  
Heckmondwike Grammar School  
High Street  
Heckmondwike WF16 0AH

Any correspondence must clearly state:

- The precise nature of the complaint
- The steps taken so far to resolve the complaint
- The action you would like to see taken to resolve the complaint

Please ensure the complaint is dated and marked Private & Confidential.

#### *Actions:*

The Headteacher (Chair of Governors or Clerk) 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. The response will confirm the next steps and timescales.

The Headteacher (Chair of Governors or Clerk) will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher (Chair of Governors or Clerk) can consider whether a face to face or video conference 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 (Chair of Governors or Clerk) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher (Chair of Governors or Clerk) will provide a formal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Headteacher (Chair of Governors or Clerk) is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The final 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.

The Headteacher (Chair of Governors or Clerk) will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

### **Stage 3 – Complaints Panel**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a complaints panel that will be convened to consider the matter. The panel will consist of 2 school Governors and one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school, all who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The Clerk to the Governing Body will also be present to take minutes but cannot take part in proceedings. This is the final stage of the School's complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, within 10 school days of the date of the outcome letter from stage 2. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

The Clerk will arrange a panel and write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting which may be in person or by video conference. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the 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.

If the complaint is:

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

Stage 3 will be heard by a panel of independent, co-opted governors.

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 panel meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

*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 (Human Resources) 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, venue of the meeting / video conference, 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 panel at least 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days before the date of the meeting. The panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

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

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. 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 panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel 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 panel 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 Clerk will provide the complainant with the panel's decision, with a full explanation and the reason(s) for the decision, in writing, within 5 school days of the end of the meeting. The decision of the panel will conclude the investigation into the complaint and be considered final. Where appropriate, the response will include details of actions the School will take to resolve the complaint. The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent in writing or 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.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a complaints panel.

### **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 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by The Trust. They will consider whether The 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 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

### **Monitoring and Review**

All complaints received, including informal concerns, are logged and a record of the outcome kept by all individuals involved.

Records relating to concerns and formal complaints are confidential, except where statutory access is requested.

Governors monitor the procedure for dealing with complaints so that all complaints are handled appropriately. Governors will examine the complaints log periodically and will consider the need for any changes to the procedure following this. The policy will be also be reviewed periodically in line with the policy review schedule.

### **Availability**

A copy of this policy is available to download on the School website or by request via the school reception.

All members of staff are made aware of and trained on the requirements of this policy.

## Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Heckmondwike Grammar School Academy Trust, FAO (delete as appropriate), Assistant Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Headteacher, Chair of Governors, and Clerk to the Governing Body, 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>Email address:</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.</b>

<p><b>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</b></p>
<p><b>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.</b></p>
<p><b>Signature:</b></p>
<p><b>Date:</b></p>
<p><b>Official use</b></p>
<p><b>Date acknowledgement received:</b></p>
<p><b>By who:</b></p>
<p><b>Complaint referred to:</b></p>
<p><b>Action taken:</b></p>
<p><b>Date:</b></p>

## 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 panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Headteacher or complaints panel 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

**(this could be the Headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)**

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 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 panel 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 / video conference, 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 panel's decision.

## Panel Chair

The panel'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 panel 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 panel is open-minded and acts independently.
- No member of the panel 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).

### Panel Member

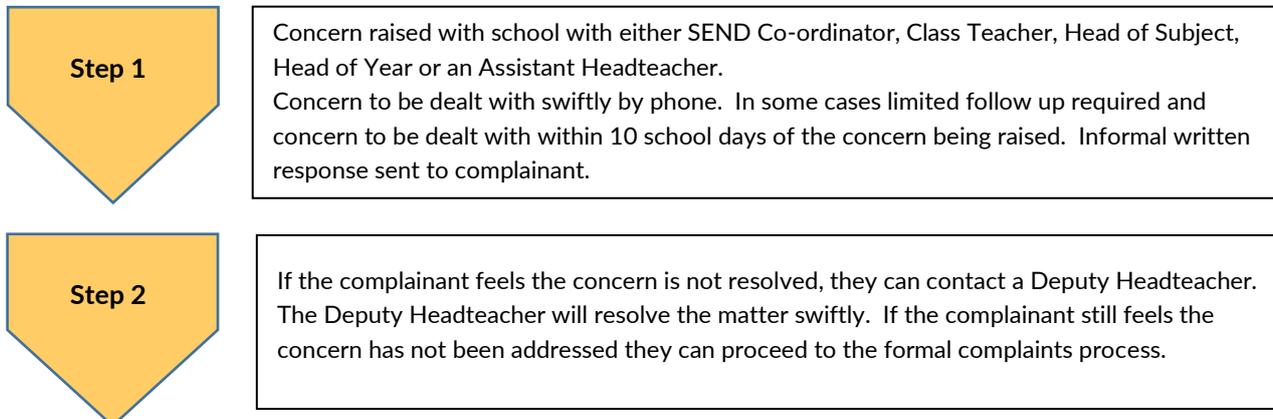
Panel members should be aware that:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so.
- No governor may sit on the panel 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.
- 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 panel 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 panel 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 panel 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 panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

## Flowchart of the Trust's complaints policy

### Informal Concerns:



### Formal Complaints:

