



Great schools at the heart
of our community

Managing Complaints Policy

Updated 11th May 2026

Policy reference:	A34a
This policy is to be reviewed:	3 yearly
The next review date is:	May 2029
Review is the responsibility of:	Trust Board

Review History

Review ratified:	November 2020
Review ratified:	May 2022, 19 th May 2025
Review ratified:	2 nd February 2026, 18 th May 2026

Authorised by: Full Trust Board

Contents

1. Who can make a complaint?.....	4
2. The difference between a concern and a complaint.....	4
3. How to raise a concern or make a complaint.....	4
4. Anonymous complaints.....	5
5. Timescales.....	5
6. Complaints received outside of term time.....	5
7. Scope of this complaints procedure.....	6
8. Data Protection complaints.....	7
10. Withdrawal of a complaint.....	8
11. Stage 1 – Informal complaints.....	8
12. Stage 2 – Formal Complaints.....	9
13. Stage 3 – Panel Hearing.....	10
14. Complaints escalated to/about the Trust, CEO or Trustee.....	13
Appendix A: Aspire Learning Trust Complaints Form.....	17
Appendix B Roles and Responsibilities.....	20
Complainant.....	20
Investigator.....	20
Complaints Co-ordinator.....	21
Clerk to the Governing Body / Trust Board.....	21
Committee Chair.....	21
Committee Member.....	22

1. Who can make a complaint?

- 1.1 This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at schools within Aspire Learning Trust. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Aspire Learning Trust 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.

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. Aspire Learning Trust takes concerns and complaints seriously and will make every effort to resolve matters 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, the Principal or Headteacher will refer you to another member of staff. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern/complaint, they 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.
- 2.5 We understand, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Aspire Learning Trust will attempt to resolve the matter internally through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

3. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

- 3.1 Complainants must use Appendix A: Complaints Form to raise their complaint. 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.
- 3.2 Complaints against school staff (except the Principal or Headteacher) should be made in the first instance to the Principal or Headteacher via the school office or email address, using the complaints form in Appendix A. Please mark the correspondence as Private and Confidential.

- 3.3 Complaints that involve or are about the Principal or Headteacher should be addressed to the Local Governing Body Clerk via governor.clerk@sirharrysmith.com for Sir Harry Smith or clerk@aspirelearningtrust.com for either primary school or via the school office. Please mark the correspondence as Private and Confidential.
- 3.4 Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole of a local governing body should be addressed to the Local Governing Body Clerk via governor.clerk@sirharrysmith.com for Sir Harry Smith or clerk@aspirelearningtrust.com for either primary school or via the school office. Please mark the correspondence as Private and Confidential.
- 3.5 Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a trustee of the Trust should be addressed to the Trust Governance Professional via lschneikert@aspirelearningtrust.com or by post to the head office. Please mark the correspondence as Private and Confidential.
- 3.6 Complainants must use Appendix A: Complaints Form to raise their complaint. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the relevant school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation, such as Citizens Advice, to help you.
- 3.7 If your complaint is a Data Protection complaint, please refer to section 8 below.
- 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 We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Principal, Headteacher or Chair of Governors will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

5. Timescales

- 5.1 You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

6. Complaints received outside of 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. Scope of this complaints procedure

- 7.1 This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Aspire Learning Trust other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 If a complainant commences legal action against Aspire Learning Trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to academies	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – through the appeals process via the local authority.
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	<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 (MASH).</p> <p>https://www.safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk/</p> <p>https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/children-s-social-care/integrated-front-door-mash-and-early-help</p>
Exclusion of pupils from a school*	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school’s complaints procedure. The Behaviour policy can be found here SHSCC Policies or New Road Policies or Park Lane Policies</p>
Whistleblowing	<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 whistle-blowers in education who</p>

	<p>do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</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>
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the Trust Grievance Policy.
Staff conduct	<p>Complaints about staff, from another staff member will be dealt with under the Trust 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>
Conduct of Trust staff (not school-based)	Please contact the Trust Governance Professional via lschneikert@aspirelearningtrust.com with details of your complaint, and the matter will be passed to the most appropriate person to investigate.
Complaints about external agencies who use school premises or facilities	External agencies or companies should have their own procedures to deal with complaints about the services they offer. Please contact them directly.

8. Data Protection complaints

- 8.1 The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA) requires that we help people who want to make complaints about how we use their personal information.
- 8.2 A Data Protection complaint could be about any aspect of our processing or of our processing of a Data Subject's Personal Data but might commonly be about:
- Processing that does not reflect Aspire Learning Trust's privacy notices
 - Sharing Personal Data with/sending to an unauthorized person
 - Processing beyond the Trust's Retention Period
 - Failing to keep Personal Data appropriately secure
 - Failure to comply with Data Protection Law
 - Failing to comply with a data subject access request properly; or
 - Failure to comply with a Freedom of Information rights request properly or in accordance with our Freedom of Information policies.

- 8.3 Data Protection Complainants must use Appendix B: Complaint Form for Data to raise their complaint. 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.
- 8.4 The completed form must be returned to the Principal or Headteacher via the school office or email address.
- 8.5 At the conclusion of their initial investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal response within 30 days of the date of receipt of the complaint.
- 8.6 If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint as detailed below in section 12.

9. Resolving complaints

9.1 At each stage in the procedure, Aspire Learning 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 better;
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the same issue 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 policies or processes in light of the complaint;
- an apology

10. Withdrawal of a complaint

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

11. Stage 1 – Informal complaints

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

11.2 Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher, year head / subject head or head teacher, dependent on what the complaint relates to.

11.3 Complainants must use Appendix A: Complaints Form to raise their complaint.

- 11.4 Complainants should not approach members of a local governing body or a Trustee to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at other stages of the procedure.
- 11.5 At the conclusion of their initial investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.
- 11.6 If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

12. Stage 2 – Formal Complaints

- 12.1 Formal complaints must be made to the Principal or Headteacher via the school office. This should be done in writing, using Appendix A: Complaints Form.

(unless they are about the Principal/Headteacher/Governors see point 11.10, or the CEO, Trustees, Trust see point 13)

- 12.2 The Principal or 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.
- 12.3 Within this acknowledgement, the Principal or Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, clarify or ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Principal or Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.
- 12.4 The Principal or Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team.
- 12.5 During the investigation, the Principal, 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.
- 12.6 At the conclusion of their investigation, the Principal, Headteacher or Investigator will provide a formal written response. This should be within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.
- 12.7 If the Principal, Headteacher, or Investigator is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

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

12.9 The Principal or Headteacher will advise the complainant on how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

12.10 If the formal complaint is about the head teacher, principal, or member of the governing board (including Chair or Vice-Chair), this must be made to the Local Governing Body Clerk via governor.clerk@sirharrysmith.com for Sir Harry Smith or clerk@aspirelearningtrust.com for either primary school or via the school office where a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions in stage 2.

12.11 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 escalated to the CEO of the Trust. [point 13](#)

13. Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

13.1 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.

13.2 Stage 3 consists of a panel hearing held by at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. (e.g. a leader at another school within the trust or the CEO) This is the final stage of the complaint's procedure.

13.3 A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Local Governing Body Clerk via governor.clerk@sirharrysmith.com for Sir Harry Smith or clerk@aspirelearningtrust.com for either primary school or via the school office. within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response, using Appendix A: Complaints Form. If the complaint is about the CEO, Trustees or the Trust, see [point 13](#).

13.4 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.

13.5 Requests received outside of this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

13.6 The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

13.7 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.

13.8 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 the trustees and an independent panel member, see point 13.

13.9 The complainant may bring a friend or relative to the panel meeting to provide support. 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 example, if an employee is called as a witness to the panel meeting, they may wish to be supported by their union.

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

13.10 At least 5 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- reconfirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting
- reconfirm details of the hearing process and attendees
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 4 school days before the hearing.

13.11 Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

13.12 At least 5 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- Confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the hearing, 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 4 school days before the hearing.

13.13 Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 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

13.14 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.

13.15 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.

13.16 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.

13.17 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 or Trust's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

13.18 The Chair of the committee will provide the complainant and the school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days.

13.19 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 the school.

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

13.21 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 head teacher.

13.22 A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

13.23 All 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 2008 Act requests access to them.

14. Complaints escalated to/about the Trust, CEO or Trustee

14.1 If a complaint is escalated to Aspire Learning Trust or if a complainant wishes to complain directly about the CEO, trustees or the trust, then the complaint should be sent to the Trust Governance Professional via lschneikert@aspirelearningtrust.com to be investigated, using the Complaints form in Appendix A.

14.2 The Trust Governance Professional will write to the complainant acknowledging the complaint within 5 school days of the date that the written request was received. The acknowledgement will confirm that the complaint will now be investigated under Stage 1 of this Complaints Policy and will confirm the date for providing a response to the complainant.

14.3 Following the investigation, the Trust Governance Professional will write to the complainant confirming the outcome within 15 school days of the date that the letter was received. If this time limit cannot be met, the CEO will write to the Complainant explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date.

14.4 If the complaint concerns the CEO 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 CEO.

14.5 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the previous stage, the complainant should write to the Clerk to the Trust Board asking for the complaint to be heard before a Complaint Panel, within 5 school days.

14.6 The Trust Governance Professional 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.

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

14.8 Trust Governance Professional will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Trust Governance Professional will provide an anticipated

date and keep the complainant informed.

14.9 If complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Trust Governance Professional 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.

14.10 If the complaint is:

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

Stage 3 will be heard by a completely independent committee panel.

14.11 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.

14.12 One of the Complaint Panel members will be independent of the management and running of Aspire Learning Trust. This means that the independent Complaint Panel member will not be a Trustee or an employee of the Trust.

14.13 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 their union.

NB. 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.

14.14 Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

14.15 At least 5 school days before the meeting, the Trust Governance Professional 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 4 school days before the meeting.

14.16 Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 2 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.

14.17 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.

14.18 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.

14.19 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

14.20 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.

14.21 The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Aspire Learning Trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days.

14.22 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 Aspire Learning Trust.

14.23 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 Aspire Learning Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

14.24 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 head teacher.

14.25 A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken,

regardless of the decision.

14.26 All 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 2008 Act requests access to them.

15. Next Steps

15.1 If the complainant believes the school or Trust did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 3.

15.2 The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Aspire Learning Trust. They will consider whether Aspire Learning 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 ESFA online at:

www.education.gov.uk/contactus,

by telephone on: 0370 000 2288

or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit

Education and Skills Funding Agency

Cheylesmore House

5 Quinton Road

Coventry, CV1 2WT

Appendix A: Aspire Learning Trust | Complaints Form



Please complete and return this form for all complaints to the relevant person/email address as detailed in our complaints policy.

A separate copy of this form can also be found on the policies page of the school and trust websites.

marked Private and Confidential

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: Postcode: Daytime telephone number: Evening telephone number: Email address:
Please circle the current stage at which the complaint is at: Stage 1 Stage 2 Stage 3

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

If progressing your complaint to stages 2 or 3, why was the response from the previous stage not satisfactory?

What actions do you feel might resolve your complaint at this stage?

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

Signature:

Please print name:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Action taken:

Date:

Appendix B 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

(this could be the head teacher or CEO / designated complaints governor or trustee 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, 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.