



Bramley Sunnyside Infant School

Complaints Policy & Procedure

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Revision History

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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 Bramley Sunnyside Infant 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. Once a complaint has been made, it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

A “**concern**” can be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt’ where reassurance is required.

A “**complaint**” can be defined as ‘an expression or statement of dissatisfaction’ towards the actions taken or a perceived lack of action taken.

The school will class concerns as complaints and follow the same procedures for both, as outlined within this policy.

Complaints can be resolved formally, through this procedure, or informally dependent on the complainant’s choice. Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and the appropriate procedures will be implemented.

It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally with class teacher, office staff or headteacher, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint’s procedure. Bramley Sunnyside Infant School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

A “**grievance**” is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the school has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly. Grievances will be dealt with in line with the school’s Grievance Policy.

The definition of “**unreasonable complaints**” is outlined in the ‘Managing serial and unreasonable complaints’ section of this policy, this also includes “**vexatious complaints**”.

For the purpose of this policy, “**duplicate complaints**” are identical complaints received from a complainant’s spouse, partner, grandparent or child. These complaints will not be addressed again, the individual making the second complaint will be informed that the complaint has been dealt with on a local level and if they are dissatisfied with the result, they can appeal to the DfE.

Any new details provided by a complainant’s spouse, partner, grandparent or child, will be investigated and dealt with in line with the 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 on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with the class teacher in the first instance. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint to the headteacher following the stages and the criteria of the stages of the complaints procedure. If the complaint is not resolved then a formal complaint should go to the chair of governors.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage three of the procedure.

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

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the chair of governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the chair of governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the clerk to the governing body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Concerns and complaints should follow the stages, as set out in this policy and not skip stages. Complainants will be directed back to the correct stage and person, in this instance.

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

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

Anonymous complaints

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

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within **3 months** of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents (including school holidays, bank holidays, inset days and weekends). We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame only if exceptional circumstances apply.

In the case of any timescales changing, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner.

Responses

The school will send a receipt to the complainant once the complaint is received, in writing within 3 working days. Investigations and responses at Stage one and two will be within a **15 working day** period.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period. If the complaints timeline runs into holiday period this timeline will be counted before and continue after the holiday period. Weekends, school holidays, inset and bank holidays are not counted in this time frame.

Scope of this complaints procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of • Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Education Department, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Tel: 01709 382121 Complaints
• Matters likely to require a Child protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have any serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local Authority Designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding at the Multi-Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Tel: 01709 336080
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i> The school's behaviour policy can be found on the school website. https://www.bramleysunnysideinfant.co.uk/ Alternatively, a paper copy can be requested from the school reception office.

Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, **Bramley Sunnyside Infant School wants to resolve the complaint.** If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur

- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

All complainants will be given the opportunity to fully complete the complaints procedure and a complaint can progress to the next stage of the procedure even if it is not viewed as “justified”.

Vexatious, unreasonable, duplicate & unclear complaints

From time to time the school receives vexatious or unclear complaints. These complaints will be managed accordingly. Should your complaint be unclear, we will endeavour to work with you to be specific about your complaint. We have a zero tolerance to abusive, offensive or intimidating behaviour towards our staff members and will report instances that we feel necessary to the police. To protect the school’s resources and staff wellbeing, we may at times need to appoint a single point of contact or adapt the way in which we will respond to you, this could and would not be exclusive to us considering a reduced communication plan and or a block on incoming calls/ emails or face to face/contact/entry tour premises or other action. We will attempt to update you of any action and or restrictions we impose on you. The definition of “**unreasonable complaints**” is outlined in the ‘**Managing persistent or vexatious complaints and harassment**’ section of this policy. Further supplemented by the school’s ‘**vexatious complaints policy**’. For the purpose of this policy, “**duplicate complaints**” are identical complaints received from a complainant’s spouse, partner, grandparent or child. These complaints will not be addressed again, the individual making the second complaint will be informed that the complaint has been dealt with.

Managing persistent or vexatious complaints & harassment

Definitions

The school maintains the vexatious complaints policy in respect of vexatious and or persistent complaints, and may choose to exercise it if appropriate.

For the purpose of this Policy, a **Vexatious** or **Persistent** complainant is any Interested Party who raises complaints (either informally or formally) or who frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the school, and whose behaviour is considered unreasonable.

Such behaviour may be characterised by:

- Actions that are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific or repetitious.
- Prolific correspondence or excessive email or telephone contact about a complaint.
- Use of Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably.
- An insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes.
- An insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner.
- An insistence upon only dealing with the headteacher on all occasions, irrespective of the issue and or the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters; and
- An insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, e.g. If the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the school because it is unlawful.

For the purpose of this policy **Harassment** is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as above in such a way that they:

- Appear to be targeted over a significant period of time, at one or more members of staff.
- Cause ongoing stress to individual members(s) of staff.

- Have a significantly adverse effect on the whole or part of the school.
- Are pursued in a manner which could be perceived as intimidating and or oppressive by the recipient(s). This could include situations where persistent demands or criticism whilst not especially taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have the cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

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

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Continually and unreasonably dispute the headteacher's decision on policy and operational matters.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their 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 complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the DfE.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- Repeatedly comments, queries and concerns school communication and improvement, taking up time and energy of staff unnecessarily.
- Uses threats to intimidate, pressure or bribe.
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence.
- Knowingly provides falsified information.
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) or the same issue being raised to multiple staff, as it could delay the outcome being reached. Whenever possible, the headteacher or chair of governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If the behaviour continues, the headteacher or chair of governors will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, the school may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months. A decision to stop responding will only be considered in circumstances where the following statements are true: Every reasonable step has been taken to address the complainant's concerns.

Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing. Complaints can be withdrawn or resolved at any point of the procedure.

Stages of the complaint procedure

Stage one – Informal concern made to a member of staff (usually class teacher)

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing. Written acknowledgement of the complaint will be made within **3 working days** (Discounting school holidays, bank holidays, absence and inset days), if not resolved before this time. Initial complaint should be made directly to the Class Teacher or relevant member of staff. The headteacher and governors should not be contacted or involved at this point.

The member of staff the complaint has been made against can discuss the concern with the headteacher or complaints co-ordinator to seek support if needed. To prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls are kept and a copy of any written response is added to the record. These notes are kept securely.

If the concern is about the headteacher, the complaints co-ordinator should be informed and will need to handle the complaint. The complainant can then be referred to the chair of the governing board. In any such case as a complaint is made initially straight to the headteacher or to a governor, the complainant should be referred back to the appropriate person. The governor in question should not act alone on a complaint outside the procedure; if they do, they cannot be involved if the complaint is subject to a hearing at a later stage of the procedure.

Within **15 school days**, (Discounting school holidays, bank holidays, absence and inset days) the complainant and the relevant member of staff should discuss the issue in a respectful and informal manner to seek a mutual resolution. At this stage, the complainant will be asked what they think might resolve the issue – any acknowledgement that the school could have handled the situation better is not an admission of unlawful or negligent action. Every reasonable effort should be made to amicably resolve this concern. If an appropriate resolution cannot be sought at this informal level, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome following the initial discussions, the complainant may wish to proceed to the next level of the procedure.

The member of staff will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage one.

The complainant should only take this same issue to the next stage if they are dissatisfied with the outcomes. The complainant must have evidence that specific parts of this complaint have been resolved to move forward. They should not bring additional or new concerns on top of this concern to stage two. These should be explored at Stage one to ensure the member of staff has had the opportunity and time to positively resolve the concern.

Stage two – Formal complaint made to the Headteacher

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage one, has evidence that the complaint was not resolved and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage two – to the headteacher.

The complainant must clearly state what was not resolved at Stage one. This will help the Stage two investigator to understand the scope of the problem and avoid revisiting areas that were already adequately addressed. This is in order to:

- **Manage expectations:** It ensures the complainant knows exactly which parts of their complaint are being considered, preventing confusion or disappointment.
- **Support a timely response:** By focusing on outstanding issues the investigation can be completed efficiently, leading to a quicker resolution.

A request to escalate to Stage two must be made to the headteacher, via the school office, within **5** working days of receipt of the Stage one response.

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The headteacher will record the date the complaint is received to them and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **5 working days** (Discounting school holidays, bank holidays, absence and inset days).

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.
- make every reasonable effort to resolve the complaint
- at the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written summary response

Within **15 school days**, from the receipt of the complaint, (discounting holidays, bank holidays, absence and inset days) the complainant and the relevant member of staff should discuss the issue in a respectful and informal manner to seek a mutual resolution. At this stage, the complainant will be asked what they think might resolve the issue – any acknowledgement that the school could have handled the situation better is not an admission of unlawful or negligent action.

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

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

If an appropriate resolution cannot be sought at this informal level, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome following the initial discussions, the complainant may wish to proceed to the next level of the procedure.

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

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

Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

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

The complaint will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage three – Investigation by the chair of governors

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint at both Stage one and two, has evidence that the complaint is not resolved and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage three – a meeting with the Chair of Governors, and then if needed the members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

The complainant must clearly state what was not resolved at Stage one and Stage two. This will help the Stage 3 investigator to understand the scope of the problem and avoid revisiting areas that were already adequately addressed. This is in order to:

- Manage expectations: It ensures the complainant knows exactly which parts of their complaint are being considered, preventing confusion or disappointment.
- Support a timely response: By focusing on outstanding issues the investigation can be completed efficiently, leading to a quicker resolution.

A request to escalate to Stage three must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within **5 working days** of receipt of the Stage two response.

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 working days** (discounting holidays, bank holidays, absence and inset days).

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

The clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of a meeting with the chair of governors and clerk, in the first instance. They will aim to convene a meeting within **20 working days** of receipt of the Stage three request (discounting holidays, bank holidays, absence and inset days). If this is not possible, the clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

The complainant is required to respond to the clerk within **2 working days**.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The chair of governors will endeavour to resolve the complaint at this stage. If an appropriate resolution cannot be sought at this level, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome following these discussions, the complaint committee will convene. On the same timescale and detail, as above.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint but will involve the chair of governors and the clerk. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the chair of the complaints committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Bramley Sunnyside Infant School available, the clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage three.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. 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 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 staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

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 working days** before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least **5 working 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.

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

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not permitted.

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

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

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

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

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Bramley Sunnyside Infant School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within **15 working** days (discounting school holidays, absence, leave, bank holidays and inset).

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 by Bramley Sunnyside Infant School.

If the complaint is:

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

Stage three will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

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 Bramley Sunnyside Infant School will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

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 three.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Bramley Sunnyside Infant School. They will consider whether Bramley Sunnyside Infant School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

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



Flanderwell lane, Bramley, Rotherham, S66 3QW
Telephone: 01709 543061 E Mail: enquiries@bsi.school

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to The Head Teacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

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

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

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

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

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

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:

- sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
- interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint o consideration of records and other relevant information o analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator (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, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information
 - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person

- keep records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage one and two paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

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

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

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

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

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

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

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