The Good Shepherd Trust School Complaints Procedure

1. Introduction

The Good Shepherd Trust ("the Trust") holds at its heart a mission, inspired by Jesus, the Good Shepherd, to bring *'life in all its fullness.'* This means our core purpose is to establish a transformational culture for human flourishing and for educational excellence in all of our schools.

*'I have come that you may have **life**, and have it in all its fullness. I am the Good Shepherd.'* John 10:10-11

St Mark and All Saints C of E Primary School is dedicated to providing the best possible Christian education and support for its pupils. The partnership we have with parents/carers is of paramount importance to achieving this aim. We welcome any feedback and we recognise that despite our best intentions, this may not always be positive, and that there will always be areas in respect of legitimate complaints where improvements can and must be made.

To enable this to happen we have a clear, fair and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints to or against the school, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.

This policy explains the steps that will be followed whenever an issue arises that causes concern. Any person, including members of the general public, may make a complaint about provision of facilities or services that our school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply.

This procedure does not apply to complaints about:

- Admissions to school
- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- School reorganisation proposals
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation
- Exclusion of children from school
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use the school's premises or facilities

In these cases, there are other separate or statutory procedures. *see school website*

The school will not respond to anonymous complaints under this policy, however, the Headteacher and / or Chair of the Local Governing Committee ("The Chair") will consider whether the issue and fear of identification are genuine or the issue is one of child protection.

For more information on our school's provision for protecting our pupils, please refer to our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and our Allegations of Abuse Against Staff policy, both of which are available .

All conversations and correspondence will be treated in confidence; however, it is important that all parties involved should be aware that some information may have to be shared with others as part of the handling of the complaint in accordance with this procedure.

If we cannot meet the timescales set out in our policy, we will provide a clear explanation of the reason for this along with details of the indicative timescales.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed. The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the school.
It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations, and refers to good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE).

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

Arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) about the school's support are within the scope of this policy. Such complaints should first be made to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)/Headteacher; they will then be referred to this complaints policy. Information about the rights of parents of pupils with disabilities who believe that our school has discriminated against their child can be found here

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

1.1 Timescales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.
We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the next school day.
If at any point we cannot meet the time scales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

1.2 Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school will keep a record of the complaint (see section 10) and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that the school is not meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by calling 0300 123 4234 or 0300 123 4666, or by emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. An online contact form is also available at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts.

2. When an issue or concern first arises

2.1 The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*. The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.

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

If you have a concern that you would like to take up with the school you should initially inform a member of staff either in person, over the telephone or in writing. You may wish to approach your child'*s* class teache*r* first as they will be best placed to help you directly or by letting you know which other member of staff you should be speaking to.

We encourage parents to approach staff with any concerns they may have, and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding. We will take your concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

2.2 Initial informal meeting

When a concern has been received, you may receive either a telephone call from the member of staff or Headteacher or you may be invited to attend a meeting with a member of staff or the Headteacher to discuss your concerns.

If invited to a meeting, you are welcome to bring a friend, partner or, in the case of a pupil who has raised a concern, a parent along for support. It may be appropriate for a pupil to attend the meeting if their parent has raised a concern, depending on the nature of the issue.

Staff have a responsibility to ensure that you understand any future points of action that have been agreed and will make a record of what has been discussed, as well as any outcomes and a plan of action, if one has been agreed.

All staff will do their best to ensure your concerns are dealt with appropriately and efficiently, but if an agreement cannot be reached, or if you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you can make a formal complaint to the Headteacher. It is preferable for you to make your formal complaint in writing, but complaints can be made in person or by telephone.

There is no prescribed timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue and informal discussion, although we expect to resolve most issues within **10 school days**.

3. Formal Complaints

The Chair reserves the right to refer complaints that are taken straight to them back to the appropriate member of staff if it does not warrant the Local Governing Committee's ("LGC") involvement at that point.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher you should contact the Chair of the Trust directly at chair@goodshepherdtrust.org.uk

If your complaint is about the Chair or a member of the Local Governing Committee you should contact the Clerk to the Local Governing Committee ("the Clerk") directly using the contact details on the school website.

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

In order to ensure complaints are dealt with efficiently and effectively, St Mark and All Saints C of E Primary School deals with formal complaints in the stages described below.

3.1 Stage 1 – Complaint heard by the Headteacher

If you feel that your concern has not been dealt with as you would like, are unhappy with the outcome of your informal meeting or feel that the issue is serious enough that it warrants it, you can make a formal complaint to the school.

Formal complaints can be raised:

- By letter or email: head@stmarkallsaints.uk
- Over the phone: 01483 422924
- In person
- By a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

It is preferable for you to make your formal complaint in writing and we provide a proforma for you to complete which can be accessed at the back of this document or from the school office, but complaints can be made in person or by telephone. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office- office@stmarkallsaints.uk, 01483 422924.

The Headteacher will acknowledge your complaint in writing or offer a full response within **5 school days**. If further investigation is required, the Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within **5 school days** and will advise you that a full response will be provided within **20 school days**.

The Headteacher will ensure the complaint is investigated thoroughly

T*he Headteacher* or the designated senior leader may invite you to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint and possible solutions, or to explain what has happened or will happen, as a result of your complaint.

In certain circumstances, the school may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the school will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

The Headteacher or the designated person will keep a record of all interactions with you and other staff, meetings and decisions made in reference to your complaint.

The Headteacher or designated person will respond to you in writing within **20 school days** of receiving your complaint outlining their full response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If they have decided not to take any further action, they will explain what has been decided and how they reached the decision. You will also be advised of your right to take the matter further if you are not satisfied with the response.

If your complaint is about a member of staff, the Headteacher or designated person will talk to that employee and invoke the relevant procedure if required. It will not be appropriate to inform you of the outcome of any investigation in relation to an individual member of staff.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher you should contact the Chair of the Trust directly at chair@goodshepherdtrust.org.uk

If your complaint is about the Chair or a member of the Local Governing Committee you should contact the Clerk to the Local Governing Committee ("the Clerk") directly using the contact details on the school website.

3.2 Stage 2 – Complaint heard by the Chair of the Local Governing Committee / or investigated by the Trust in the case of a complaint against the Headteacher / Executive Headteacher.

If, having spoken to the Headteacher, you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you should write to the Chair of the Local Governing Committee ("the Chair") within **10 school days**[1], explaining your concern and the steps that have resulted in you taking this course of action.

[1] Exceptions to this time frame may be considered on a case by case basis

The Chair will acknowledge your complaint in writing or offer a full response within **5 school days**. If further investigation is required, they will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 school days and will advise you that a full response will be provided within **20 school days**. In cases where the Chair decides further investigation is required they may decide to invite another member of the governing committee to independently assess whether all the correct information was taken into account during Stage 1. This may enable resolution before proceeding to the hearing.

The Chair may invite you to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint and possible solutions or will happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair will explain that the LGC has a strategic role, and is responsible for strategic oversight of the school and the Headteacher is responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school and for advising on and implementing the Trust and local school policies. The Headteacher is solely responsible for making day to day decisions.

This stage offers an opportunity for achieving conciliation between all parties and discussions between the Chair and the Headteacher will be key to resolving the complaint and agreeing a way forward In reaching this decision, the Chair will determine to what extent the issues relate to responsibilities that:

(a) are delegated to the Headteacher by the Trust Board; or
(b) fall within the LGC's remit only; or
(c) fall within the remit of the Trust Board; or
(d) are within the Headteacher's Terms and Conditions of Employment and relate to the internal organisation, management and control of the school.

For delegated responsibilities and matters within the remit of the LGC, the Chair may look at the whole issue afresh.

The Chair will keep a record of all interactions with you and any decisions made in reference to your complaint.

If the Chair has decided not to take any further action, they will explain verbally or in writing as appropriate what they have decided and how they reached the decision. You will also be advised of your right to take the matter further if you are not satisfied with the Chair's response.

3.3 Stage 3 – Complaint heard by Local Governing Committee's Complaints Panel

Complaints about the Headteacher not resolved at Stage 2 move to management within the Trust's Complaints Policy.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you should write to the Clerk within **10 school days**[2] of the outcome of stage 2, explaining your concern and the steps that have resulted in you taking this course of action.

The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of your request within **5 school days**.
The complaints panel will usually be convened within **20 school days** of receiving the request for your complaint to be heard by the governing committee's complaints panel. Where it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date within that timescale, all reasonable steps will be taken to agree a time and date mutually convenient to all parties.

The main function of the complaints panel will be to:

a) Ensure the complaint has been properly handled by the Headteacher (and Chair)
b) Ensure that a sufficient comprehensive investigation was carried out
c) Ensure that the correct procedure / policies were followed.

The panel will also review whether the Headteacher (and Chair) acted reasonably.

The Clerk will arrange and facilitate the meeting of the complaints panel. You are entitled to an independent panel to hear your complaint and the complaints panel will consist of three members of the LGC at a Trust school who have no former knowledge or involvement in the matter being considered. At least two members of the panel will be independent of the management and running of the school and drawn from members of another Trust school's LGC.

The chair of the panel will be nominated from within the group of panel members. All panel members will have access to, and will be familiar with, this complaints policy. The Clerk will confirm to all parties in writing, the date, time and venue for the meeting at least **10 school days** in advance.

The Clerk will request that you supply any paperwork you feel the panel will require to consider your complaint fully. The Headteacher and Chair will also be requested to supply copies of their responses to the previous stages of the procedure, and any further paperwork they consider the panel will require to consider the complaint fully. Copies of all paperwork will be distributed to all parties by the Clerk at least **5 school days** in advance of the meeting

You are welcome to bring a friend or partner for support to the meeting and the Chair of the panel will ensure the meeting is conducted within a relaxed atmosphere whilst keeping to the formal agenda. The Headteacher (and Chair if attending) is also invited to bring a representative or member of staff for support.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

[2] Exceptions to this time frame may be considered on a case by case basis

No previously undisclosed evidence relating to the complaint should be introduced during the meeting.

The Clerk will inform you (and the Headteacher and / or Chair) in writing of the panel's decision within **5 school days** of the meeting. The letter will include a summary of the issues, an outline of the main points of discussion, the reasons for the decision and the proposed actions or outcome. The panel may suggest you meet with the Headteacher and / or Chair again to agree a way forward.

The letter may recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The panel's decision is the final stage in the complaints procedure.

3.4 Stage 4 - Contacting the Education Skills Funding Agency

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the ESFA. The ESFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the school. The ESFA will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint. However, it will look into:

- Whether there was undue delay, or the school did not comply with its own complaints procedure
- Whether the school was in breach of its funding agreement with the secretary of state
- Whether the school has failed to comply with any other legal obligation

If the school did not deal with the complaint properly, it will be asked to re-investigate the complaint. If the school's complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the school will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:
https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

4. Unreasonable Persistent Complaints

4.1 Definition of an unreasonable complaint

St Mark and All Saints C of E Primary School 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 school. Operating from a position of mutual respect, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

St Mark and All Saints C of E Primary School defines unreasonable complaints as “those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints”.

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- refuses to accept that 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 school’s complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified comments 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 a complaint where the school’s complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- 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/or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with

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

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

Complainants should limit the 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) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair 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 asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact St Mark and All Saints C of E Primary 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 usually be reviewed after 6 months.

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of the following factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns;
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options;
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience.

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include barring an individual from St Mark and All Saints C of E Primary.

4.2 Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

9.3 Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

5. Record keeping Local Governing Committee review and monitoring of complaints

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and the GDPR Data Protection Policy.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the governing board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

The Headteacher will report annually to the governing committee and the Trust on the number of formal complaints received and the levels at which they have been resolved. No details identifying the complaint or any member of staff will be published.

The governing committee will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Headteacher where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

6. Staff Complaints

Staff who have a concern about a colleague or volunteer in school should refer to the **whistleblowing** policy, which is available here.

The procedure for dealing with any other staff complaint or employment grievance is set out in the school's **staff discipline, conduct and grievance** policies which are available.

7. Complaints Policy Review

The governing committee of St Mark and All Saints C of E Primary School will review this policy every 2 years, or sooner if there are any legislative changes or recommendations from the Trust. The governing committee of St Mark and All Saints C of E Primary School will also review this policy following a complaint panel meeting to ensure that it met the requirement to provide a clear, fair and efficient complaints procedure and make recommendations to the Trust for consideration in the development of this policy.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

See Appendix 2

9. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Safeguarding and Child protection policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Exclusions policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- SEN policy and information report
- Privacy notices

Date reviewed: June 2021

Date for next review: June 2023

Appendix 1 Complaints Form

Name of complainant:	
Contact details:	**Address:**
	Telephone:
	Email:
Outline of your complaint and how it has affected you (the complainant) / pupil:	
Have you discussed the matter already with a member of staff, if so, who? What was the outcome?	
What would you like to happen as a result of your complaint?	

Signature:	
Date:	

For school use:

Date received:	
Date acknowledged and by whom:	
Summary of action taken:	

Appendix 2

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

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

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- cooperate 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 or elsewhere 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, Chair or Complaints Panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Headteacher, Chair 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.

Clerk to the Local Governing Committee

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the Complaints 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, 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 and 2 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within timescales specified herein
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the Complaints Panel's decision.

Complaints Panel Chair

The Complaints Panel 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).

Complaints Panel Member

Panel members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so

  No governing committee member 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

  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 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.
- Should be caution against unconscious bias