



**Tudhoe Learning Trust**

# **Guidance & Procedures**

## **for**

# **Dealing with Complaints**

**Approved by:** Trust Chief Executive Officer **Date:** March 2024

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## 1. Introduction

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

This procedure aims to reassure parents and others with an interest in the school/Trust and that:

- Where possible, complaints will be dealt with informally and at the lowest possible level in order to reach a resolution promptly.
- Any complaint against a Trust school will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution; and
- The Trust recognises that a willingness to listen to questions and criticism and to respond positively, can lead to improvements in school practices as well as provision.

The Trust Complaints Policy is reviewed regularly and monitored using the number and range of complaints received, how these were dealt with, and any action taken. The monitoring and review of complaints can be a useful tool in evaluating the school's performance.

In our Trust, responsibility for reviewing and monitoring the policy has been delegated to the Trust Chief Executive Officer.

## 2. 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 Tudhoe 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.

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'*.

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

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint's procedure. Tudhoe Learning Trust takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Tudhoe Learning Trust will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint's procedure.

## 3. 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, if they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved,

the next step is to make a formal complaint.

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 3 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Head Teacher or Chief Executive Officer) should be made in the first instance, to the relevant Head Teacher via the school office. Please mark any written concerns or complaints as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Head Teacher should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer, via the Trust Office. Complaints that involve the Chief Executive Officer should be addressed to the Chair of Directors, via the Trust Office. Complaints about Governors or Directors should be addressed to the Clerk to the Trust Board of Directors via the Trust Office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. The Trust office email is [office@tudhoelearningtrust.co.uk](mailto:office@tudhoelearningtrust.co.uk).

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.

**Table 1 - Where to direct your complaint:**

<b>Member of staff the complaint refers to:</b>	<b>Complaint to be sent to:</b>	<b>Complaint investigated by:</b>	<b>Decision maker:</b>	<b>Appeal to:</b>
Member of school staff including teacher, support staff etc.	Head Teacher	SLT as delegated by Head Teacher	Head Teacher	Local Governing Body (LGB)
Head Teacher/Governor	CEO	Member of Executive team or an independent investigator or a governor as agreed with the TLT CEO if an Executive Team member	CEO	Chair of Trust Board
TLT Central Team (not CEO)	CEO	Member of Executive Team as delegated by CEO	CEO	Chair of Trust Board
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Chair of Trust Board	Trustee(s) delegated by Chair of Trust Board or an independent investigator	Chair of panel delegated by Chair of Trust Board	Chair of Trust Board
Chair of Local Governing Body	Clerk of LGB	Member of Executive Team as delegated by CEO	CEO	Chair of Trust Board

Chair of Trust Board	Clerk to Trust Board	As agreed with CEO - external	Chair of Trustee panel	Chair of Trustee appeal panel
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School complaints will be managed by the Trust CEO and Trust complaints will be managed by the Director of Finance and Business Services.

In some cases, the Trust may reserve the right to use an independent investigator: this will only usually be in very exceptional circumstances. Charges or fees will apply to the school where the staff/volunteer works.

#### 4. Anonymous complaints

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

#### 5. Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The Trust is unable to consider any complaints/evidence which falls outside the three months timeframe unless exceptional circumstances apply.

#### 6. 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.

#### 7. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions to schools</li> <li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>• School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul>	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the appropriate Local Authority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a> .

Exceptions	Who to contact
	*complaints about the application of the Behaviour Policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees (Confidential Reporting Policy) including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>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: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the Local Authority or the Department for, depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff grievances</li> </ul>	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <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>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Curriculum - content</li> </ul>	Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against Tudhoe Learning Trust 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.

## 8. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Tudhoe 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 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.

## 9. Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

## 10. Complaints Policy - Procedure

### Stage 1 - Informal Complaints

It is in everyone's best interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage and as quickly as possible. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. Therefore, all staff will be made aware of the policy so that they will know what to do should they receive a complaint.

If the member of staff involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the complaint could be referred to the Head Teacher. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial. Where the complaint concerns the Head Teacher the complainant will be referred to the Chief Executive Officer.

The Head Teacher's influence may already have shaped the way complaints are handled in the school and resolved the complaint at this stage. If the informal process has been exhausted and no satisfactory solution has been found the complainant will be advised that their complaint could progress to Stage 2 of the policy.

If the complaint is against the Head Teacher, they should request that their concerns be referred to the Chief Executive Officer. The complainant will be invited to put the complaint in writing to the Chief Executive Officer using the form attached at Appendix 1. The form should be sent to the Chief Executive Officer, as soon as possible. The Chief Executive Officer can be contacted via the Trust Office at [office@tudhoelearningtrust.co.uk](mailto:office@tudhoelearningtrust.co.uk).

The Chief Executive Officer or the nominated investigating officer where appropriate will seek any necessary clarification of the concerns including interviewing the complainant where this would be helpful. The Chief Executive Officer may nominate an investigating officer to explore the complaint on their behalf and will advise the complainant of the outcome of their consideration. Other than in exceptional circumstances the Chief Executive Officer or the nominated investigating officer will provide a response to the complainant within **15 school days** of them requesting the involvement of the Chief Executive.

Where the first approach is made to a Director, the complainant will be referred to the appropriate person and advised of the policy. Directors will not act unilaterally on an individual

complaint given that they may be required to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

## Stage 2 - Formal Complaints

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 and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **5 school 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.

In some cases, the Trust may reserve the right to use an independent investigator: this will only usually be in very exceptional circumstances. Charges or fees will apply to the school where the staff/volunteer works.

Depending upon the nature of the complaint, the investigation timeframe will vary. At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within **15 school days** of the date of receipt of the complaint.

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 Tudhoe Learning Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, or a member of the Panel (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

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

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Panel or
- the majority of the Panel

Stage 2 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Panel or at the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response



### Stage 3 - Appeal

Where a complainant has made an approach to the school through the formal stage and is not satisfied with the outcome, they should write to the Trust at [office@tudhoelearningtrust.co.uk](mailto:office@tudhoelearningtrust.co.uk) within **10 school days** giving details of their concerns and asking for an appeal against the decision or action taken by the Head Teacher or Chief Executive Officer.

The panel will only hear appeals that have already progressed through Stages 1 and/or 2 of this procedure.

The appeal will be heard by at least 3 members, consisting of two Trustees/Governors and one other appropriate person who is independent of the Trust/school. The independent person will be appropriately qualified with relevant experience and training.

The panel cannot be made up solely of Trustees/ governing body members, as they are not independent of the management and running of the school. All members must have no prior connection to the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) **within 3 school days**.

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

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within **20 school days** of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

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

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.

At least **7 school days** before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least **7 school**

**days** before the meeting.

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

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 normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The 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, the individual school and the Trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within **10 school days**.

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 the individual school or Tudhoe Learning Trust.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Panel or
- the majority of the Panel

Stage 3 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 Tudhoe Learning Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

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

## **11. Next Steps**

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

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Tudhoe Learning Trust. They will consider whether Tudhoe Learning Trust 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](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD.



## Complaint Form

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Name of School:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone  
number:

Evening telephone number:

Please provide as much detail about  
the complaint as possible:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.  
(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?

**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:**

## Procedural Guidance for Appeal Panel

1. This document is intended to set out best practice for the operation of an appeal panel and it is recognised that, where circumstances dictate, it may be necessary to depart from this.
2. The Clerk to the Board of Trustees / Local Governors will constitute an appeal panel made up of three members. The constitution of the panel is set out in section 5 of the policy.
3. Once a panel is identified the panel should elect a chair. The chair will work in conjunction with the clerk to make arrangements for the panel hearing, including:
  - a. Setting the date for the hearing;
  - b. Identifying an appropriate venue for the hearing giving thought to, amongst other matters, the need for 'break out' rooms and the safeguarding of children. In all but exceptional circumstances the venue should be within the Trust however it is recognised that in some circumstances it may be necessary to hear a complaint at an external venue;
  - c. Setting a date for the exchange of documentation between the parties and the panel;
  - d. Carrying out an initial appeal of documents to ensure all documentation is available to the panel and the parties for the hearing. It should be remembered that a number of policies and procedures are available on the Trust/School websites and these documents can be called up during the course of the hearing where necessary;
  - e. Identifying any support which is necessary for the panel including HR advice, legal advice, clerking and/or minute taking;
  - f. Setting an agenda for the hearing which provides for each party to open their case and question the other party on their case. The chair will ensure that this agenda is followed during the hearing in order to enable each party to fairly set out their case without interruption.
4. Where either party requests a change of dates or provides documents after the specified deadline, a decision on the same will be at the Panel's absolute discretion. Where repeated or unreasonable adjournment requests are received from one party the Panel may proceed in the absence of a party.
5. The scope of the Panel's inquiry will be as set out in the relevant policy. The Panel has discretion to consider matters beyond the scope of the policy where, in the view of the Panel, it will assist the parties to have a determination in order to achieve reconciliation between the parties.
6. The Panel will make a decision on the matter in issue and may also make recommendations to the Trust/School which will assist, for example, in achieving reconciliation between the parties or in avoiding future similar incidents. Such recommendations may arise from the matter in issue or from matters which become apparent during the panel hearing.
7. The hearing will be non-adversarial in style. All parties and their representatives should ensure that they communicate appropriately throughout the hearing. The Panel has the absolute discretion to halt proceedings if an inappropriate approach is taken by any party.
8. After the hearing the Panel will deliberate in private accompanied by any advisor. The decision may be communicated orally after these deliberations where appropriate. In all circumstances the decision will be communicated in writing within **15 working days**.



## Complaint Appeal Form

**Your name:**

**Pupil's name:**

**Name of School:**

**Your relationship to the pupil:**

**Address:**

**Day time telephone number:**

**Evening telephone number:**

**Please provide as much detail about the complaint as possible:**

**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
- 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 - HeadTeacher/CEO/Clerk

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.