Federation of Kymbrook & Thurleigh Primary Schools

Working in partnership with families to unlock the potential of every individual. Together, we nurture a self-belief and a lifelong passion for learning.

Enjoyment – Enrichment – Excellence – Equality

FGB Approval	October 2025
Review Date	October 2027

Federation of Kymbrook & Thurleigh
Primary Schools

Complaints Policy

Parents or carers of children that are registered at the schools and any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Kymbrook Primary School or Thurleigh Primary School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

Introduction

Kymbrook and Thurleigh schools always welcome purposeful communications with our parents, pupils and the wider community. Whilst we endeavour to sustain good working relationships with all our stakeholders, we recognise that there are occasions when you will have a concern or complaint you will want to bring to our attention. We try to resolve concerns or complaints informally wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

Stages of the complaints procedure

There are **THREE** stages within our complaints procedures:

Stage 1 – Informal
Stage 2 – Formal
Stage 3 – Final

At each stage in the procedure, we wish to resolve the complaint as quickly as possible and will set realistic and reasonable time limits for each action within each stage. If appropriate, we will acknowledge whether the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. We aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect confidentiality at all times
- Treat complainants with respect
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Explain steps taken to address the issue and an indication of the timescales within which any changes are made
- Undertake a review of the schools' policies in light of the complaint where appropriate

Scope

This policy covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Kymbrook Primary School and/or Thurleigh Primary School.

This policy does not cover complaints relating to admissions, statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN); safeguarding matters; exclusion; whistleblowing; staff grievances and staff discipline; national

The procedures outlined in this policy adhere to DfE's '*Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2019*'.

curriculum. Complaints relating to these areas are dealt with through separate procedures which are detailed in **Annex 1** on page 8)

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

Governors

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis and discussing a concern/complaint with them may also prevent them from being involved in considering complaints at Stage 3 of this procedure.

Anonymous complaints

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

Time scales

The complaint must be made within three months of the incident. Where a series of associated incidents have occurred, the complaint must be made within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint (e.g. 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 either Kymbrook Primary School or Thurleigh Primary 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.

Complaints received outside of term time

Complaints made outside of term time will be considered if received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Complaint about the Head Teacher or governors

- Complaints against school staff (except the Head Teacher) should be made in the first instance to the Head Teacher via the school office**.**
- Complaints that involve or are about the Head Teacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. The Chair will, if an informal resolution cannot be reached, designate an appropriate skilled Governor to investigate in the same way outlined in Stage 2. The final decision regarding the complaint will be made by the Chair of Governors following the conclusion of the investigation.
- Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or a part of or the whole governing board should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body, via the school office. Stage 2 of the complaints procedures 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.

Serial or Persistent Complaints

Every reasonable effort will be made to address the complainant's needs. However, the Chair of Governors will close a complaint if it is deemed to be persistent. This will happen if it is clear there is insufficient evidence to pursue the case, but a complainant is persistently raising the same issue. Equally this may happen if a complaint has been investigated and no justification for the complaint found.

It will be acceptable for the Chair of Governors to close a complaint if the complainant refuses to co-operate with the school's relevant procedures, places excessive demands on the time of staff and Governors and if the complainant acts in an abusive or offensive manner.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, we will ask for the withdrawal to be confirmed in writing.

Safeguarding

Wherever a complaint indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the school is under a duty to report this immediately to the Local Authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy, available for download from our schools' websites or in hard copy from the schools.

Social Media

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible we request that the complainants do not discuss complaints publically or via any form of social media (e.g. Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter etc.). Complaints will be dealt with complete confidentially and we expect complainants to observe the same.

Data Protection Principals

All documentation and correspondence relating to the complaint will be held securely in accordance with data protection principles under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and held securely by the school for the period determined in the schools' Data Retention Schedule published on the schools' websites.

Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body reviews the complaints procedure **annually**, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. Details about individual complaints are not shared with the whole Governing Body, except in general terms, in case a Panel needs to be convened.

Complaints about the schools' failure to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) concerning Data Breach procedures and/or Subject Access Requests

If the complaint relates to procedures not being followed as outlined in the schools' **Data Breach Policy and Procedures** document where a data breach has been reported to either school; or as outlined in the schools' **Data Subject Request Policy** where a subject access request has been made to either school, then the complainant should follow this complaints procedure. If the complaint reached the end of Stage 3 and as the complainant, you believe that we have not dealt with your complaint in accordance with this complaints procedure, you can contact the Information Commissioner Office (ICO) on 0303 123 1113. You can find more information about making a complaint to the ICO at this web page: https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

A flow chart in **Annex 3** provides a summary of the three stages of the complaints procedure detailed below.

Stage 1: Informal

Where a parent/carer, pupil or another individual has a concern about an aspect of our schools' provision and/or service, we would encourage them to come in to either school and talk to us to help resolve the issue informally. We operate "an open door" policy at both schools whereby our staff and/or the Head Teacher are often available at the beginning and end of the school day to talk about any concerns raised. Where a more formal arrangement is appropriate, a meeting to discuss the concern with a relevant member of staff, or your child's teacher or the Head Teacher, as appropriate, can be arranged either directly with the staff member or via the school office.

Both Kymbrook & Thurleigh schools take concerns very seriously and make every effort to ensure concerns are resolved as quickly as possible.

At an informal stage, if a response from the school is requested, then we will acknowledge an informal complaint within 5 working days and provide a response within 15 working days.

If however, a complaint or concern remains unresolved informally, you can escalate it to a formal complaint (Stage 2). We will follow the procedures outlined in this complaints policy to resolve the issue internally.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

1. Formal complaints must be made in writing and addressed to the Head Teacher marked 'Confidential' (unless they are about the Head Teacher) via the school office. The **Complaint Form** (**Annex 4**) at the end of this document can be used to briefly set out the facts, stating what you consider should have been done or where the school has not met reasonable expectations. (*A complaint can be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so*).

2. The Head Teacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 5 school working days. Within this response, the Head Teacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see if the written complaint submitted is not clear. The Head Teacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

3. The Head Teacher (or other person appointed by the Head Teacher for this purpose) will conduct an investigation. You may be asked for further information and/or invited to a meeting to discuss your complaint.

4. During the investigation, the Head Teacher (or other investigator) will, if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish. The investigator will keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

5. At the conclusion of the investigation, the Head Teacher will make a decision.

6. The Head Teacher will provide a formal written response to you **within 14 working school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.** If the Head Teacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide you with an update and revised response date.

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

8. If you are dissatisfied with the Head Teacher's response and wish to proceed to the next stage (Stage 3) of this procedure, you must inform the Clerk in writing, via the school office, within 7 school working days of receipt of the Head Teacher's response.

Stage 3 : Final Stage

This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

1. A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 7 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
2. The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 5 school days.
3. The Clerk will make arrangements with the Chair of Governors to form a Complaints Panel and propose three possible meeting dates. They will aim to convene a meeting within 10 school days from the date of acknowledgement of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep you informed.
4. The Clerk will:

- confirm and notify you of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if you are invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the Panel at least **5** school working days before the meeting.

5. If you reject the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in your absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.
6. Members of the Governing Board's Complaints Panel will consist of three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint.
7. The Complaints Panel will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Panel. If there are fewer than three governors from the Governing Body available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through the LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the panel. Alternatively, an entirely independent panel may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 3.
8. The Complaints Panel will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations as appropriate to your needs.
9. If you are invited to attend the meeting, you 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 panel meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

10. Written documentation will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days before the date of the meeting. The Committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.
11. The Panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.
12. The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.
13. The Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel can:
    - uphold the complaint in whole or in part
    - dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
14. 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.
15. The Chair of the Panel will provide you and the school with details of the outcome and a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school working days of the panel meeting date. Where appropriate, details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint will also be included.
16. You will also receive details of how to contact the Department for Education if you are dissatisfied with the way in which your complaint has been handled by the school.

Note: If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or the entire governing body or the majority of the governing body then Stage 3 will be heard by a panel of independent, co-opted governors.

Next Steps

If you (the complainant) believe that the school did not handle your complaint in accordance with our published complaints procedure or we acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of our duties under education law, you can contact the Department for Education after you have completed Stage 3.

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

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

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

Annex 1 Areas covered by separate complaint procedures

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 **Bedford Borough Council**
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. 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).
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.*
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

Annex 2

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant The complainant should:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible and ask for assistance as needed
- 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
- 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

and 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 provided during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond

At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator prepares a comprehensive report for the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors or the Complaints Committee that sets out the facts, identifies and rationalises solutions and recommends courses of action to achieve the solutions.

The Head Teacher, Chair of Governors or Complaints Committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator *(this could be the Head Teacher / 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 and liaise with staff members, Head Teacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure.

The Complaints Co-ordinator needs to be aware of issues regarding sharing third party information and situations requiring 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.

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 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.

Complaint Panel Chair The panel's Chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

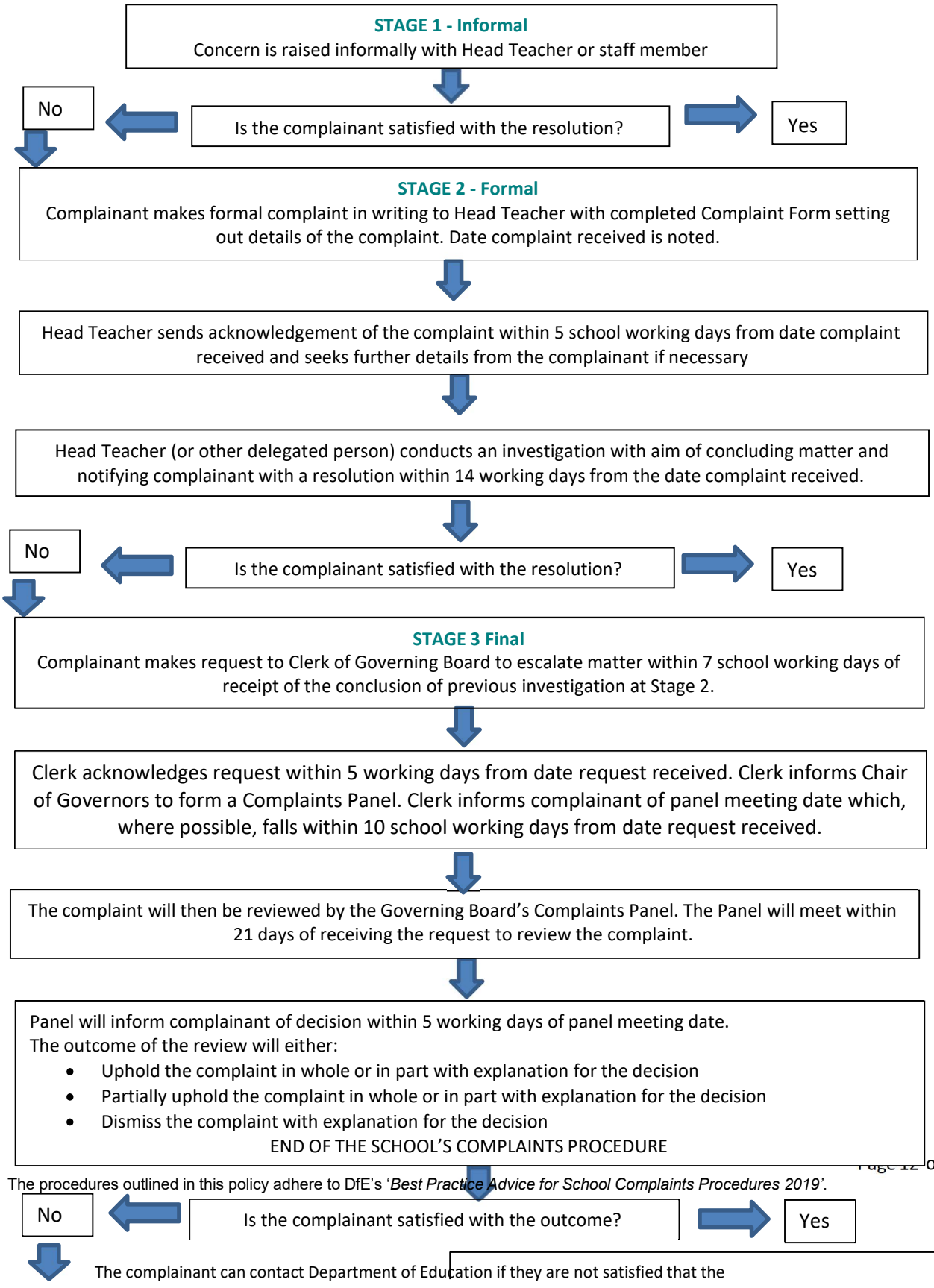
- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the panel is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
- if a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the 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

Complaints Panel Member Panel members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
- no governor may sit on the 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.

Annex 3 – Overview of Complaints Procedure



The procedures outlined in this policy adhere to DfE's '*Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2019*'.

Annex 4

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors, Clerk, as appropriate) 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:**
1. Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

2. What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
3. Are you attaching any paperwork? YES / NO **If yes, please give details.**
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

The details provided in this form will be treated in confidence and kept secure.