



Complaints Policy

March 2026

Approved by the Governing Body 17/03/26

**This Policy is due for renewal in Term 4
2026–27**

COMPLAINTS POLICY

OF

GODINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Within this policy the Godinton Academy Trust is referred to as Godinton Primary School or the school, the Principal of the Academy Trust is referred to as the Headteacher and the Board of Trustees is referred to as the Governing Body.

Reference to parents includes carers of children in the school.

SECTION ONE - INTRODUCTION

We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children, and that the Headteacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with their families. However, the school is obliged to comply with Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 to have procedures in place to deal with concerns and complaints relating to the school.

A copy of this policy can be found on the school website and is available in hard copy upon request to the school office.

This policy outlines how the school will approach all complaints received and incorporates the procedure the school will follow to address them.

Details of the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the complaints process can be found at Appendix 3 of this policy.

Parents who are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school, are encouraged to talk to the child's class teacher or member of staff concerned in the first instance with a view to resolving the issue informally. This is the Informal Stage of the process.

Any matters that cannot be resolved under the Informal Stage will be considered under the Formal Stages following the procedures outlined in this policy.

All complainants have the right to complain to the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied after the Governing Body have dealt with their complaint.

SECTION TWO – 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 Godinton Primary School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

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’.

SECTION THREE – DEALING WITH A CONCERN OR A COMPLAINT

It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many of these can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint’s procedure.

Godinton Primary School takes concerns and complaints seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

During the process, if you have difficulty discussing the issue with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the headteacher, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff you are referred to may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

If your concern or complaint is not resolved by the informal process or you would like to raise your concerns formally, Godinton Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints policy.

3.1 How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

At the informal stage, 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 of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Formal complaints must be in writing unless there are exceptional circumstances requiring an alternative method for making the complaint. Complainants should use the 'Complaints Form' attached at Appendix 1 for this purpose but a letter or e-mail containing the details requested on the form is acceptable. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation for example, the Citizens Advice to help you.

Formal Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the headteacher via the school office. Any correspondence should be marked Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. Any correspondence should be marked Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

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.

3.2 Anonymous Complaints

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

3.3 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. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

3.4 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.

3.5 Confidentiality

It is recognised that it is important to secure the confidence of all concerned. Conversations and correspondence will be treated with discretion and parents are assured that a complaint will not disadvantage their child. All parties will be asked to keep all aspects of the complaint confidential but it must be accepted that some information may have to be shared in order to carry out a thorough investigation. Details of the complaint and outcome of the investigation will be limited to Staff and Governors involved with the complaint. This will include staff and Governors investigating the complaint or those called as witnesses. All other Staff and Governors will be advised that a complaint has been made, given confirmation of the action taken and told of items highlighted by the investigation requiring action. The identity of those involved will be limited to those involved in the investigation. All complaints will be handled in accordance with our GDPR (Data Protection) policy.

3.6 Scope of this Complaint's Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Godinton Primary School, 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"> Admissions to schools 	<p>Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for</p>

	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.

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

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

3.7 Stages of the Complaints Process

Stage 1 – Informal Complaints

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

Complaints should be raised in person, in writing or by telephone with either the class teacher or member of staff concerned.

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.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the class teacher or member of staff concerned will provide an informal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. The response will include advice that if the complainant is unhappy with the outcome they can make a formal complaint under Stage 2 of the policy. The formal complaint should be made in writing using the 'Complaints Form' attached at Appendix 1.

Stage 2 – Formal complaints

Formal Complaints (other than those relating to the headteacher)

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office. This must be done in writing using the 'Complaints Form' attached at Appendix 1.

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

Within this response, the headteacher will issue a copy of the Complaints Policy and provide a target date for sending a response to the complaint (within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint). They will also seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see if not already provided. The headteacher may arrange a face-to-face meeting to clarify the details of the complaint.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation of the complaint to another member of the school's senior leadership team but will be responsible for deciding on and communicating its outcome.

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. The Headteacher may ask a member of staff who is not directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to be present at the meeting to take notes of the proceedings to aid in the complaint investigation.

At the conclusion of the 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 Godinton Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint to the Complaints Panel and the timeframe for doing so should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

Formal Complaints about the Headteacher

Formal complaints about the headteacher must be made to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. This must be done in writing using the 'Complaints Form' attached at Appendix 1.

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

Within this response, the Chair of Governors will issue a copy of the Complaints Policy and provide a target date for sending a response to the complaint (within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint). They will also seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see if not already provided. The Chair of Governors may arrange a face-to-face meeting to clarify the details of the complaint.

Note: The Chair of Governors may delegate the investigation of the complaint to another Governor but will be responsible for deciding on and communicating its outcome.

During the investigation, the Chair of Governors (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. The Chair of Governors may ask a governor or member of staff who is not directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to be present at the meeting to take notes of the proceedings to aid in the complaint investigation.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Chair of Governors will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Chair of Governors 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 Godinton Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Chair of Governors will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint to the Complaints Panel and the timeframe for doing so should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

Formal Complaints about the Chair or Vice Chair of Governors

If the formal complaint is about the Chair or Vice-Chair of Governors, a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions outlined in 2.2 above in place of the Chair of Governors.

Formal Complaints about the whole or majority of the Governing Body

If the formal complaint is about

- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body,

Stage 2 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a panel hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The panel will be made up of 2 Governors and one person who is independent of the management and running of the school. This is the final stage of the complaint's procedure.

Note: Stage 3 will be heard by a completely independent panel if the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, the entire governing body or the majority of the governing body.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made in writing to the Clerk, via the school office or by e-mail using clerk@godinton.kent.sch.uk, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge its receipt in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

The Clerk will arrange a panel hearing and write to the complainant and the other parties involved to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the escalation to Stage 3 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.

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the panel hearing. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate (i.e. 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 complaint's procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct

complaints will be considered under the school's staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend panel hearings.

At least 10 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm the date of the meeting to all parties involved and notify them of the time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the complaints panel at least 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days before the date of the meeting. The panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The panel will not review any new complaints or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint at the meeting. 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. Recordings will only be permitted if all parties attending give their consent. Consent must be sought before meetings or conversations take place and agreement will be recorded in any minutes taken.

One of the panel members will be appointed to chair the meeting which will follow the procedures shown in Appendix 2 – Complaints Panel Procedures.

Before the panel hearing the Chair of the Complaints Panel will hold a briefing session with panel members to outline the nature of the complaint and ensure all members are clear on the process to be followed as outlined in the Policy.

Where the complaint is of a technical nature the Chair of the Complaints Panel will be responsible for ensuring that advice is sought from the relevant specialist before the hearing. The advice sought will include what the panel needs to

consider, where to obtain the information to support the decision-making process and what aspects to cover in meetings with those involved in the complaint.

The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. If the complaint was identified as being of a technical nature and guidance was sought prior to the hearing the Chair of the Complaints Panel may need to seek further advice relating to clarification or interpretation of evidence obtained. They will decide whether to:

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

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the panel 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.

Within 5 school days of the panel hearing, the Clerk to the Governors will write to the complainant and Godinton Primary School on behalf of the of the Complaints Panel detailing the actions taken to investigate the complaint and providing a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, the response will include details of actions Godinton Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education (DfE) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Godinton Primary School.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Appeals

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 DfE after they have completed Stage 3.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Godinton Primary School. They will consider whether Godinton Primary School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE online using the DfE Customer Help Portal at: <https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk/> by telephone on:0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Ministerial and Public Communications Division

Department for Education

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

SECTION FOUR – UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS

4.1 What is Considered to be an Unreasonable Complaint?

Godinton 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. However, 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.

Godinton Primary School defines unreasonable complainants 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’.

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

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaint's procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted 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 complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's 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 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:

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- 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 number of communications with the 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 of Governors 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 Godinton 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.

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 banning an individual from Godinton Primary School.

4.2 Barring from the School Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Schools will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If a parent’s or other persons behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask the individual to leave school premises. In serious cases, the Headteacher or the local authority can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the barred individual may wish to make. Schools should always give the barred individual the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the barred individual, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the barred individual should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

SECTION FIVE – MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Governing Body will monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher will log all formal complaints received by the school and record how they were resolved. Governors will examine the complaints log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

This policy and procedure will be reviewed annually.

SECTION SIX – EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

At Godinton Primary School, we are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all members of our school community irrespective of race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy or maternity, marriage and civil partnership or socio-economic background. We are determined to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity and ability to participate fully in school life. We tackle discrimination through the positive promotion of equality by challenging stereotypes and by creating an environment that champions respect for all. At Godinton Primary School, we believe that diversity is a strength that should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit us. All school policies have an explicit aim of promoting equality and will be reviewed in terms of their contribution and effectiveness in achieving this aim.

Complaint Form

Appendix 1

Please complete and return to the school office marked 'Private and Confidential' for the attention of :

Headteacher (Formal complaints other than those relating to the headteacher)

Chair of Governors (Formal Complaint relating to the headteacher)

Clerk to Governors (Formal complaints relating to the Chair of Governors or the whole Governing Body)

The recipient 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:
Email address:

Please give details of your complaint, including what actions you have taken to try and resolve it.

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

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Action taken:

Date:

At the panel hearing:

- The Chair of the Panel will introduce those present, outline the complaint being considered and explain the hearing process.
- The Complainant will have the opportunity to present their complaint.
- The Headteacher will have the opportunity to present the school's position.
- The Complainant and Headteacher will be given the opportunity to ask questions on each other's presentation.
- Panel members will have the opportunity to ask questions of the Complainant and the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher will be given the opportunity to make a final statement to the panel.
- The Complainant will be given the opportunity to make a final statement to the panel.
- The Chair of the Panel will ask the Complainant if he or she feels they have had the opportunity to say everything they wish to say.
- The Chair of the Panel will explain that the Panel will consider the complaint and provide a written decision within 5 school days.
- The Complainant, Headteacher, other members of staff and witnesses will then leave the meeting to allow the panel to deliberate.
- The Panel will discuss the complaint and all the evidence presented and make a decision on the complaint. If their decision is to fully or partly uphold the complaint, they will also consider the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint and recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.
- The Clerk to the Governors will write to all parties on behalf of the Panel clearly setting out the decision of the Panel within 5 school days of the Panel hearing.

Clerking arrangements:

The Clerk to the Governors will take notes at the meeting and support the Chair of the Complaints Panel with written communications relating to the complaint. The clerk will not be involved in the hearing or any investigation in to the complaint other than to take notes.

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 to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal

- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The headteacher 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 Governing Body

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 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 panel's decision.

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 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

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 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