BARTON SEAGRAVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Date: September 2026

Review Date: September

2027

We have adopted this policy from the DfE

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 Barton Seagrave 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'.

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

If you have difficulty discussing a concern 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 may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Barton Seagrave Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or staff outlined in the below flow chart:

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 2 of the procedure.

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

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as: FAO Chair of Governors- 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: FAO of the Clerk to the Governing Body-Private and Confidential.

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 Citizens Advice to help you.

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

Anonymous Complaints

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

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.

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.

Scope of the Complaints Procedure

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

Issues outside of the scope of the complaints policy:

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 North Northamptonshire County 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 about the safety or welfare of a child, then you may contact the local safeguarding board
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at:https://www.gov.uk/school-behaviour-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 whistle blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer.
Staff Grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under a school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff Conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under a 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 directly.
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

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 Barton Seagrave 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.

Resolving Complaints

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

- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- An apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Stage 1 - Making a formal complaint

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher or Governors), 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.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within 10 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 Barton Seagrave Primary School 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 1 and indicate the timescale involved to do this.

Other complaints:

- If the complaint is about the Headteacher then the Stage 1 complaint form will be submitted directly to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will not consider the complaint unless the Headteacher has had the opportunity to seek to resolve the matter first.

If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body it should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark it as "Private and Confidential, Formal Complaint."

- If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors and/or an individual Governor a suitably skilled Governor will be appointed to complete an investigation at Stage 1.

- If the complaint is about the whole Governing Body it will be considered by an independent investigator and/or the Local Authority.

In each case, at the end of the investigation, the person(s) investigating the complaint will provide a written response.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2.

- Where the complainant considers that the Headteacher's formal written response does not resolve the complaint, the complainant may ask the Chair of Governors to consider the matter.
- **Where the Stage 1 complaint was about the Headteacher**. If the complainant considers that the formal written response from the Chair of Governors does not resolve the matter, the complainant may ask that the complaint be escalated to Stage 2 at a meeting of the Governors Complaints Committee.
- **Where the Stage 1 complaint was about an individual Governor**. If the complainant considers that the formal written response from the appointed Governor does not resolve the matter the complainant may ask that the complaint be escalated to Stage 2 at a meeting of the Governors Complaints Committee.
- **Where the Stage 1 complaint was about the whole of the Governing Body**. If the complainant considers that the formal written response from the independent investigator and/or the Local Authority does not resolve the matter the complainant may ask that the complaint be escalated to Stage 2 and be heard by a complaints committee of independent governors.

Stage 2 procedure

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – either a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available or a committee of independent Governors from outside of Barton Seagrave Primary School Governing Body, as outlined above.

Stage 2 will be the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk (or in their absence an appointed member of staff), via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 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 15 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 complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Barton Seagrave Primary School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

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 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 committee will not 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 and Barton Seagrave Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 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 Barton Seagrave Primary School.

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 Barton Seagrave Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

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

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

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

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at:

https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to: Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street Manchester, M1 2WD.

The Department for Education will usually only intervene when it is expedient or practical to do so and a Governing Body has:
failed to act in accordance with its duties under education law;
acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising education related functions.

If delivering or posting a letter, the complainant must address it to the Chair of Governors at the school address and should write 'For immediate attention - Formal Complaint' on the envelope. This will ensure that the complaint is dealt with promptly and enable the school to comply with the timeframe set out in the policy.

If emailing the complaint, the complainant should only use the official email address for the Chair of Governors, available from the school office – 01536 722793 - and not use their personal email address. In the subject field of the email, the complainant should write, 'FAO-Chair of Governors Formal Complaint'. The complainant should not share details of the complaint with other governors. A detailed knowledge of the complaint will preclude governors from serving on a review panel if the complaint is not resolved by the Chair of Governors. Governors receiving a complaint in this way should immediately refer it back to the Chair of Governors without considering the content.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing **within 5 school days of receiving it personally** and investigate the matter so that the complainant receives a response within **10 school days** of receipt of the complaint.

On rare occasions, the complaint may be too complex to investigate within this timeframe and, in these circumstances, the Chair of Governors will write to the complainant explaining why it is not possible to work within the timeframe laid down and to advise when a response may be issued.

As part of the investigation, the Chair of Governors may contact the complainant via a telephone call or propose a meeting to consider the issues raised. If telephoning, the Chair of Governors should determine whether it is necessary to withhold any number that is not the school's telephone number.

The focus of that conversation (if held) would be to:

- consider any gaps on the complaint form;
- consider any aspects of the complaint where additional clarification is required;

- consider the extent to which any evidence is available that has not been mentioned on the complaint form;
- establish the complainant's view as to witnesses who might need to be interviewed;
- explore what might represent an acceptable resolution to the complaint;
- discuss with the complainant whether there is anything that might help resolve matters outside the complaints procedure.

Complainants must make sure they do not covertly record any conversations about complaints. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, the Department for Education will support schools who refuse to accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The key elements of the Chair of Governor's investigation are likely to include:

- achievement of a shared understanding with the complainant of the nature of the complaint and of what it is that remains unresolved;
- establishing what has happened and who was involved;
- written statements from and/or interviews with those adults and children whose information and views need to be considered. It is expected that the voice of children will be appropriately heard and be given sufficient weight;
- a detailed report that will provide a clear record that will be helpful for any subsequent review;
- a clear analysis of the information and conclusions reached;
- an authoritative outcome that is based on the evidence and does not merely state acceptance of evidence;
- recommendations to resolve the complaint.

The conclusions and the reasons for decision making should be communicated in writing to the complainant.

The Chair of Governors will report in writing on the extent to which s/he considers the complaint should be:

- upheld in whole or in part;
- dismissed in whole or in part.

Appendix 1

Serial and persistent complaints policy

This policy outlines how the school will respond to serial and persistent complaints, which may be deemed unreasonable in nature.
This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare and safety of all children and expects all staff to share in this commitment.

All staff/volunteers must follow the guidelines set out in the staff code of conduct.

Barton Seagrave 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 our 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.

Barton Seagrave Primary School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- 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
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- 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 and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the 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 ask them to change it.

For complainants who excessively contact Barton Seagrave 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 be reviewed after six months. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Barton Seagrave Primary School.

This policy was agreed by the governing body on:

Signed:

Next Review: September 2026

Appendix 2

Summary of Complaints Process with Timelines

Informal Stage

School staff seek to resolve the complaint informally through discussion with the complainant.

If required, the complainant should submit a formal complaint within three months of the cause for complaint. If the complaint is received outside of term time, the calendar day timings for managing the complaint will start on the first school day after the holiday period.

Formal Procedure
Stage 1

Formal complaint to the Headteacher
Complaint received - Complaint acknowledged by Headteacher within 5 school days – Investigation Including any discussion with complainant) – formal written response (from Headteacher within 10 school days).

Formal complaint about the Headteacher
Complaint received by Chair of Governors - Complaint acknowledged by Chair of Governors within 5 school days – Investigation including any discussion with complainant) – formal written response (from Chair of Governors within 10 school days).

Formal complaint about the Chair of Governors or individual Governor
Complaint received by Clerk to the Governing Body – Complaint acknowledged by Clerk within 5 school days – Investigation by an appointed Governor (including any discussion with complainant) – formal written response (from appointed Governor within 10 school days).

Formal complaint about the whole Governing Body
Complaint received by Clerk to the Governing Body – Complaint acknowledged by Clerk within 5 school days – Independent investigator and/or Local Authority representative appointed - Investigation by the independent investigator and formal written response (from investigator within 15 school days.)

Stage 2
Complaint about the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or individual Governor not resolved at Stage 1
A request to escalate to Stage 2 received by the Clerk (or in their absence an appointed member of staff), via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response - complaint acknowledged by Clerk within 5 school days – Governor complaints committee appointed and meeting convened within 15 school days (where possible) – meeting takes place – Chair of committee formal written response (within 5 days of the meeting.)

Complaint about the whole Governing Body
A request to escalate to Stage 2 received by the Clerk (or in their absence an appointed member of staff), via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response - complaint acknowledged by Clerk within 5 school days – Independent complaints committee appointed and meeting convened within 15 school days (where possible) – meeting takes place – Chair of committee formal written response (within 5 days of the meeting.)

The conclusion of Stage 2 ends the Governor's role in considering the complaint. Complainants who remain dissatisfied may wish to contact the Department for Education.

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher of Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Headteacher, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant)
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant)
Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: Date:
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

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

- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- Co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:

- sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
- interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
- 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 that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Headteacher, Chair of Governors or complaints committee, in each case, will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator (this could be the headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- Liaise with staff members, Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LA's (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure.
- Keep records.

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.

Clerk to the Governing Body/Appointed member of staff

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and 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 Members

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so.
  No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant
  We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
  Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting
  Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
  The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal

consideration to those of adults.
If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.
However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

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