



# **BORDEN GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

## **School Complaints Procedure**

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# Complaints Procedure

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# School Complaints Policy and Procedure

## 1. Overview

Borden is committed to providing the very best education for our young people and we want our pupils to be healthy, happy and safe and to do well. We recognise the importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships with parents, carers and the wider community. We are aware that there may be occasions where people have concerns or complaints and the following procedure sets out the steps that should be followed in order to resolve these as promptly, fairly and informally as possible.

School governing bodies are required under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 to have in place a procedure for dealing with complaints relating to the school. Borden has taken notice of the non-statutory guidance updated by the Department for Education in March 2021 ('Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures').

Sometimes when concerns are more specific, there are alternative and more appropriate policies for dealing with them. The following are examples of specific topics and the correct policy to refer to should you have a concern or complaint. You can access these policies on our website or ask for a copy from the school office.

- Pupil Admissions: please see the school's admissions policy or contact Kent County Council Admissions team
- Special Educational Needs: you can use this policy to complain unless your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan and you wish to appeal against a decision that the local authority has taken. If this is the case, you need to contact the local authority.
- Staff grievance, capability or disciplinary; these are covered by separate school policies and procedures
- Anonymous complaints: Please refer to the school's whistleblowing policy
- Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests: please see the school's Data protection and Freedom of Information Policies.
- National curriculum content

## 2. Aims and principles

It is a requirement of [Section 29\(1\) of the Education Act 2002](#), that schools must have and publish procedures to deal with all complaints relating to their school.

This policy aims to:

- Encourage the resolution of concerns and complaints by informal means wherever possible
- Ensure that concerns are dealt with quickly, fully and fairly within defined time limits wherever possible
- Provide effective and appropriate responses to concerns and complaints, maintaining confidentiality wherever possible for all involved.
- Maintain good relationships between the school and all those involved
- Ensure that all staff, trustees, parents and carers are aware and have access to this policy.

Where appropriate, the school may offer mediation to resolve a concern or complaint at any stage of the process. The school may also use someone independent from the school to investigate a complex issue and to report back to the headteacher, Chair of Trustees or Trustee Complaints Panel (depending on which stage of the process the complaint is being dealt with).

### **3. Part 1: General Principles**

#### **3.1 Dealing with concerns and complaints**

A concern may be defined as ‘*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought*’ whilst 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. Borden Grammar 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 complaints co-ordinator, (Headteacher), will refer you to another staff member (usually their line manager). Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the complaints coordinator 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.

One underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Borden Grammar School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint’s procedure.

#### **3.2 Who can make a complaint?**

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Borden Grammar school about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. A concern or complaint can be made in person by parents, carers (including parents or carers of children no longer at the school) and members of the public, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

#### **3.3 How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

Concerns should be raised with the class teacher/form tutor/head of year in the first instance. At this stage informal mediation may be offered.

Mediation can:

- provide a helpful mechanism for discussion when a concern is raised
- help to rebuild the relationship between all parties

It should not be used as a substitute for an investigation during the formal stages of the complaints procedure.

If neither the complainant nor the school considers that mediation will serve any practical purpose at this point, the complainant will not be prevented from moving to the next investigative stage of the complaints procedure. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual Trustees 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 Trustees, care of the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. Complaints about the Chair of Trustees, any individual Trustee or the whole Board of Trustees should be addressed to Kate Christey, (Governance Professional) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure.

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.

### **3.4 Anonymous complaints**

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

### **3.5 Time scales**

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

### **3.6 Complaints received outside of term time**

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

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 Borden Grammar School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

### **3.7 Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, Borden Grammar 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.

### 3.8 Withdrawal of a complaint

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

## 4. Part 2 The Formal Complaints Procedure

The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

The Headteacher (complaints co-ordinator) has responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure. If staff disciplinary or capability procedures are deemed necessary, the details will remain confidential to the Headteacher and/or line manager and the complainant is not entitled to participate in the process or know details about the proceedings.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them.

### 4.1 Framework of Principles

The school's policy will:

- encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- be **simple** to understand and use;
- be **impartial**;
- be **non-adversarial**;
- have established time limits and keep people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and **fair** investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary;
- provide **information** to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

### 4.2 Investigating Complaints

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint, will make sure that they:

- establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

### 4.3 Time-Limits

The school will seek to resolve complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible. Realistic time limits will be given for action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of a new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

## 5. Part 3 Managing and Recording Complaints

### 5.1 Stage 1 – Informal complaints

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis by raising the issue with a student's form tutor, teacher or head of year. Complainants should not approach individual Trustees 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 appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

### 5.2 Stage 2 – Formal complaints

Formal complaints must be made to the head teacher (unless they are about the head teacher), via the school office. This may be done in person or in writing, preferably on the Complaint Form. The head teacher 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 head teacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The head teacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

*Note: The head teacher 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 head teacher (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 head teacher will provide a formal written response within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the head teacher 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 Borden Grammar school will take to resolve the complaint. The head teacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2. If the complaint is about the head teacher, or a member of the Board of Trustees (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled Trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2. Complaints about the head teacher or member of the Board of Trustees must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Board of Trustees or
- the majority of the Board of Trustees

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

response.

### **5.3 Stage Three (Formal): Complaint dealt with by the Chair of Trustees**

If after Stage 2, the complaint is still not resolved to the parent's / carer's satisfaction, the complaint can be referred by the parent/carers, or by the Headteacher, to the Chair of Trustees. This can be done in writing, to the Chair at the school address, c/o the Clerk to Trustees, as this will often make the situation clear to all involved parties. A template is provided in the Appendix to help with this process.

If the Headteacher is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight to the Chair of Trustees and miss out Stages 1 and 2. The Chair of Trustees has 20 school days to investigate the complaint. If it cannot be resolved within this time, the Chair will inform the complainant and explain why it is taking longer. Reasons for this may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays. The Chair of Trustees should, however, give a realistic timescale for when the complaint should be resolved. The Chair should inform the complainant of when it is expected that the investigation should be completed. The Chair of Trustees will write to the parent/carers with the outcome of the investigation.

The Chair of Trustees, if appropriate, may offer a meeting with the parent/carers or other complainant at a mutually convenient time. At the meeting, and through discussion, the Chair of Trustees will clarify what the issues are. What the parent/carers hopes to achieve will also be discussed. Together, all parties will, wherever possible, agree an acceptable outcome, to the satisfaction of all parties involved. These should be written down and agreed by all parties so there is no misunderstanding. Again parents/carers will be given a copy of this.

### **5.4 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 with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure. A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 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 10 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.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Board of Trustees or
- the majority of the Board of Trustees

Stage 3 will be heard by a completely independent committee panel. 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 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 (Human Resources) staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.*

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 5 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 3 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 normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded. The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure. The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

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

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and [Borden Grammar School](#) with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days. The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by [Borden Grammar 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 [Borden Grammar School](#) will take to resolve the complaint. The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher. A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

## 5.4 Resolving Complaints

If a complaint is found to be justified it might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Resolution of the situation may be helped if complainants are encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence. During any investigation it will be important to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred to create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

**Complaint from a member of the Public:** If a complaint is not from a parent/carer of a pupil of the school (for example, from a member of the public) it should be made directly to the Headteacher, preferably in writing.

**Social media:** In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, we ask that complainants do not raise concerns or discuss them publicly via social media (In keeping with our home-school agreement). The school will deal with complaints in confidence and expects complainants to observe confidentiality too.

## 6. Part 4: Policy for Unreasonable Complaints

### 6.1 Unreasonable, Serial, Malicious or Vexatious Complaints/Correspondence:

Borden Grammar 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.

**Borden Grammar 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 complaint's investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be considered 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 Trustees 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 [Borden Grammar 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. This restriction would not include essential contact regarding the complainant's child that would impact on their safety or learning.

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 [Borden Grammar School](#).

## 6.2 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 ESFA after they have completed Stage 3. The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by [Borden Grammar School](#). They will consider whether [Borden Grammar 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 ESFA online at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to: Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit

Education and Skills Funding Agency  
Cheylesmore House  
5 Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Complainant**

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

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

### **Investigator**

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
  - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
  - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
  - consideration of records and other relevant information
  - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The head teacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

**Complaints Co-ordinator**

(this could be the head teacher / designated complaints Trustee 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, head teacher, Chair of Trustees or the Clerk and to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
  - sharing third party information
  - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

**Clerk (Governance Professional) to the Board of Trustees / Trust Board**

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

**Committee Chair**

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach

confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

#### Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

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

No Trustee may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting

Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.

- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

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

## **Annex A**

### **Checklist for a Panel Hearing**

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.

## **Annex B Complaint Form**

Please complete and return to the Complaints Co-ordinator (Headteacher) via the School Office who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

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

**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:**