MAIDSTONE GRAMMAR SCHOOL
FOUNDED 1549

Complaints Policy 2026-27

1.1 Definitions and aims

Department for Education (DfE) guidance explains 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 or statement of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action"

In most cases, a concern can be resolved through informal means. A complaint will follow formal procedures.

This complaints policy 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 Maidstone Grammar School about any provision of facilities or services that are provided.

1.2 Aims

Maidstone Grammar School aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents/carers of pupils at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect confidentiality, where necessary
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Make sure that decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, the formal complaints procedures will be followed.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will make sure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the Education Act 2002, which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

It is also based on guidance for schools on complaints procedures from the DfE, including the model procedures for complaints and for managing serial and unreasonable complaints.

3. Scope

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline and conduct
- School re-organisation proposals
- Collective worship

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

Complaints about the school's delivery of the National Curriculum are within the scope of this policy, but complaints about the content of the National Curriculum should be sent to the DfE.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures
- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- Co-operate with the school throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication (for example, requests for information or meetings) promptly
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Respect confidentiality
- Do not approach individual governors about the complaint
- Do not publish details about the complaint on social media

4.2 The investigator

This is an individual appointed to investigate the complaint and establish the facts. They will:

- If necessary, interview all relevant parties, making clear notes and keeping these securely pending any appeal
- Carefully consider any relevant records, information or evidence
- Provide a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint

- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Be mindful of the timescales to respond
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the headteacher or complaints panel, which includes the facts and potential solutions 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

4.3 The complaints co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- The headteacher or person nominated by the headteacher
- Any other staff member providing administrative support

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- Keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure
- Make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with staff members, the headteacher, chair of governors, clerk/governance professional and local authority (LA) as appropriate
- Be aware of issues relating to:
    - Sharing third-party information
    - Additional support needed by complainants; for example, interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
    - Keep records

4.4 Clerk to the governing board

The clerk/governance professional will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints panel, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before the complaints panel hearing
- Ensure that all people involved in the complaints procedures 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 Regulation (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
- Notify all parties of the committee's decision
- Arrange the complaints panel hearing
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

4.5 Panel chair

The complaints panel chair should ensure that:

- Both parties are asked (via the clerk/governance professional) 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 the UK 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 procedures
- The meeting is minuted
- They liaise with the clerk/governance professional (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one)

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

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.

Concerns should be raised with the class teacher/form tutor/Head of Department/Head of House in the first instance. At this stage informal mediation may be offered. While this can be useful in helping the school and complainants reach an agreement and move forward, there are times when it may not be the most appropriate course of action.

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 complaint's procedure. 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 his PA. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to Mrs C Norey (Chair of Governors, care of the Clerk to the Governor), via clerk@mgs.kent.sch.uk or the Head's PA. Please mark them as 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 clerk@mgs.kent.sch.uk or the Head's PA. Please mark them as 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. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

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

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.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Complaints
The school recognises that complainants may choose to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools to assist in preparing correspondence, including complaints. The use of AI is not prohibited. However, complainants remain responsible for the content, accuracy and appropriateness of any information submitted to the school.

Where a complaint appears to have been generated wholly or substantially by AI, the school may:

- request clarification of specific concerns or allegations;
- request supporting evidence for factual assertions;
- seek confirmation that the complaint reflects the complainant's own views and concerns;
- refuse to respond to multiple substantially similar submissions generated through automated means;
- manage excessive volumes of correspondence in accordance with the school's policy on unreasonable complaints.

The school will consider the substance of a complaint rather than the method by which it has been produced. However, complaints must identify genuine concerns, contain sufficient detail to enable investigation, and be submitted in a manner that allows the school to engage effectively with the complainant.

Where there is reason to believe that AI-generated content contains inaccurate, misleading, defamatory or malicious information, the school reserves the right to seek further clarification before progressing the complaint.

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 this Complaints Procedure
This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Maidstone Grammar School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	**Who to contact**
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals	For concerns about admissions please see the School's Admissions Policy Special Educational Needs: The Complainant can use this policy to complain unless the Complainants child has an Education Health and Care Plan and the Complainant wishes to appeal against a decision that the Local Authority has taken. If this is the case, the Complainant needs to contact the Local Authority School re-organisation proposals should be raised with the KCC Contact Centre 03000 41 41 41
• 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.
• Freedom of Information	Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests: please see the School's Data Protection and Freedom of Information Policies
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.*
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.

	Anonymous complaints: Please refer to the School's Whistleblowing Policy
• Staff grievances	Staff grievance, capability or disciplinary; these are covered by separate School Policies and Procedures
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
• National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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

If a complainant contacts Maidstone Grammar School again in relation to their complaint, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and Maidstone Grammar School will not respond but will continue to complete the initial complaints procedure in full.

Duplicate complaints
After closing a complaint at the end of the complaint's procedure, if the school receive a duplicate complaint from:

- a spouse
- a partner
- a grandparent
- a child

The school will inform the new complainant that the school has already considered that complaint and the local process is complete. The school should advise the new complainant to contact the Department for Education should they be dissatisfied with the school's handling of the original complaint.

Any new aspects to the original complaint will be investigated and dealt with to the full extent of the complaint's procedure.

Resolving complaints
At each stage in the procedure, Maidstone 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.

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

Stage 1
Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the Headteacher's PA. This may be done in person, preferably in writing (using the Complaint Form including what actions you may feel might resolve the problem at this stage), 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 10 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 20 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 Maidstone Grammar 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.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.
Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk via clerk@mgs.kent.sch.uk or the Head's PA. This should be marked confidential.

If the complaint is:
- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 1 may be considered by a suitably skilled and impartial member of the Governing body or if there are no suitably skilled and impartial members it could be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the clerk on behalf of the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the chosen investigating body will provide a formal written response to the complainant and governing body.

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 – this will be considered by members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaint's procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk to the Governing Body, via clerk@mgs.kent.sch.uk or the Head's PA, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response. This must be clearly marked private and confidential.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 school days.

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

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

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

The 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 Maidstone Grammar School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local maintained school, local governing board members or governors and trustees from within academies or multi-academy trusts, or associate member of another governing body.

Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2. Complainants can request an independent complaints committee if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. Complainants should provide the Clerk with evidence of bias in support of their request. The Governing Body will err on the side of caution if the appearance of bias may be sufficient to taint any decision reached.

If the committee is convening following rejection of three proposed dates without good reason the complaint will proceed on the basis of written submissions from both parties but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

When the complainant attends the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. The Department for Education recommend that neither the complainant nor the school bring legal representation. These committees are not a form of legal proceedings. The aim of the governors' committee should be:

- reconciliation
- to put right things that may have gone wrong

The Department for Education recognises 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 complaint's 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 10 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

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

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 10 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. Schools are data controllers in their own right and have the discretion via their policies to decide for themselves whether to allow complainants to record meetings, if it's not required for the purposes of a reasonable adjustment.

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 Maidstone Grammar School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 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 Maidstone Grammar School along with copies of the minutes.

If the complaint is:
- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors convened by the clerk from either impartial members of the GB or from another local maintained school, local governing board members and governors/trustees from within academies or multi academy trusts (academy governors should seek guidance and understanding from the clerk on the different legislative framework that may need to be taken into consideration during the complaint's hearing at the appeal stage), an associate member of another governing body or from an entirely independent committee. 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 systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Maidstone Grammar School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 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 Maidstone Grammar School along with copies of the minutes.

Complaint campaigns
Occasionally, you may become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints:

- all based on the same subject
- from complainants unconnected with the school

Following an internal investigation into the subject matter by the Senior Leadership Team the school will respond either by:

- sending a template response to all complainants or
- publishing a single response on the school's website

If complainants in this case remain dissatisfied they may refer to the "Next Steps" at the end of this policy.

CONCERN FORM

Please complete and return to Maidstone Grammar School (*either class teacher/form tutor/head of year/Headteacher / school as appropriate*) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Contact email:**
Please give details of your concern, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Concern referred to:
Date:

COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return to Maidstone Grammar School *either Headteacher / Clerk as appropriate* who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Contact email:**
Please give details of your concern, 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, if required, 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 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 Headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

  The Headteacher 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
The Headteacher acting as the complaints co-ordinator, should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
  - sharing third party information
  - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

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

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

Committee Chair

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

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
  If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
  No governor 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.