Lady Joanna Thornhill (Endowed) Primary School

Learning for the Head,

Heart and Hand

Complaints Policy

We want to ensure your needs are met. If you would like this document in any other format, please contact us: office@ladyj.kent.sch.uk

Date reviewed	**December 2025**
Date of next review	**December 2026**
Reviewed by	**Rachael Foster, Headteacher**
Co-chairs of Governors	**Ellie Brown & James Coumbe**

Article 5 – The Government should respect the rights of my family and help me to know about my rights.
Article 12 – I have the right to be listened to and taken seriously.

Scope of this policy

This policy aims to set out clearly the procedure as to how the school deals with concerns and complaints. This policy aims to distinguish between a concern and a formal complaint and the procedures for invoking both.

Who can raise a concern or make a complaint?

This complaints policy and procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may raise a concern or make a complaint to Lady Joanna Thornhill 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. Lady Joanna Thornhill Primary School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to make a complaint without raising a concern first. In this case, Lady Joanna Thornhill Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stage one process outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern

A concern 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.

All concerns will be considered, investigated (as appropriate) and the person raising the concern being informed of the outcome. Where considered relevant of required, a record of any concern raised and outcome will be kept by the school, in accordance with other policies, on its Child Protection Online Management System ("CPOMS").

Concerns should be raised with the class teacher in the first instance. In the event the person raising the concern is unhappy with the outcome, the concern should be raised with the Key Stage lead. If the person raising the concern is unhappy with the outcome, or if the concern is in relation to a Key Stage lead, the concern should be raised with the Deputy Head Teacher.

Concerns about school office staff should be raised with the Deputy Head Teacher.

Where a person has a concern, they should not approach any individual governors to raise a concern as governors do not have the power to act on an individual basis.

At any stage of this process, informal mediation may be offered. While this can be useful in helping the school and the person raising a concern 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 person raising the concern nor the school considers that mediation will serve any practical purpose at this point, the person raising the concern will not be prevented from moving to the next investigative stage of the complaints procedure.

If the issue remains unresolved or if the person raising the concern is unhappy with the outcome, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Concerns should be raised with the relevant person as soon as practicably possible so that it can be dealt with, and a resolution reached quickly.

How to make a formal complaint

Formal complaints, i.e. not a concern, must be made using the form attached. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. 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.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise a formal complaint. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at the Stage 2 part of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mrs Rachael Foster, 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 Co-Chairs of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about either or both Co-Chairs of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Board via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints may be made by email and may be accompanied by a completed form, If you require a copy of the form in Word format, please contact the school office.

Complaints must be made in writing accompanied by a completed form. If you require a copy of the form to be printed out for you, please contact the school office.

Anonymous complaints

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

Timescales

You must raise the complaint as soon as possible and no later than three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, no later than three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this timeframe if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time/weekends/inset days

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after any holiday/half term period. For the avoidance of doubt, school days are any school day between school hours during

term time, excluding weekends, Bank Holidays and school inset days. If a complaint is sent on a school day but after school hours, it will have been deemed to have been received on the following school day.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Lady Joanna Thornhill Primary 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 or contact Kent County Council Admissions team 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 01622 671411
• 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. Refer to School website*
• 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. 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 any 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 Lady Joanna Thornhill Primary 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 Lady Joanna Thornhill Primary School again in relation to their complaint, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and Lady Joanna Thornhill Primary 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 complaints procedure, if the school receives 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 will advise the new complainant to contact the Department for Education should they be dissatisfied with the school's handling of the original complaint.

However, where there are any new aspects to the original complaint, these will be investigated and dealt with to the full extent of the complaints procedure.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Lady Joanna Thornhill 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

All complaints start at Stage 1.

Where a concern has been raised with the school and the person raising the concern is dissatisfied with the outcome, a formal complaint may be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office, we recommend this is made using the form attached.

Where a formal complaint is made without a concern having been raised in the first instance, the Headteacher may invite the complainant to raise a concern in accordance with the above procedure, depending on the circumstances.

All formal complaints raised and outcomes will be kept by the school, in accordance with other policies, on its Child Protection Online Management System, otherwise known as CPOMS.

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 confirm the last date in which the Headteacher will provide a formal written response. The Headteacher may also seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher may 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) may:

- 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 Lady Joanna Thornhill 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.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Co-Chairs or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1. This suitably skilled governor may be a governor from another school within the CARE Foundation group

Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Co-Chairs of Governors, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Co-Chairs 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 a suitably skilled governor from another school within the CARE Foundation Group depending on the nature of the complaint. 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 is the final stage of the complaints procedure. This is a panel meeting, which will be formed of the first three, impartial governors available and may consist of governors from another school within the CARE Foundation Trust.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk to the Governing Body 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 propose possible dates for 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.

The Clerk will try to liaise with the complainant about their availability for the meeting. However, if the complainant rejects the offer of a proposed date three times, 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 panel 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 Panel. If there are fewer than three governors from Lady Joanna Thornhill Primary School available, governors may be drawn from schools within the CARE Foundation Trust.

Alternatively, an entirely independent panel may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2. Complainants can request an independent complaints panel 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. The entirely independent panel will be drawn from suitably skilled governors from schools within the CARE Foundation Trust.

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 panel at least 7 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 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 panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The Panel Meeting

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 panels are not a form of legal proceedings. The aim of the governors' panel 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 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.

The meeting will be held in private. The panel will read the papers in advance of the meeting.

During the meeting, the panel will hear first from the Complainant in the presence of the other party and thereafter from the school. The panel will not hear from any witnesses. 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 is not required for the purposes of a reasonable adjustment.

The meeting should take no longer than 1.5 hours, depending on circumstances.

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

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

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

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

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

The Chair of the Panel will provide the complainant and Lady Joanna Thornhill Primary 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 Lady Joanna Thornhill Primary School along with copies of the minutes.

For the avoidance of doubt, the panel and the school do not give permission for the publication or the sharing of information on social media.

Complaint campaigns

Occasionally, the school 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 may 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.

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 Lady Joanna Thornhill Primary School. They will consider whether Lady Joanna Thornhill 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: Complaints procedure - Education and Skills Funding Agency - GOV.UK

Learning lessons

The governing board will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Headteacher where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Lady Joanna Thornhill Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. Anyone has the right to raise a new complaint at any time. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines unreasonable complaints as '*those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints*'.

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

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Education and skills funding agency (ESFA);
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;

- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Co-Chairs of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking including suggesting that the complainant asks a third party to act on their behalf such as the local Citizen's Advice.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication (such as restrict the complaint to a single point of contact via an email address) and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of harassment, aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately (including the decision to stop responding) and the police informed. This may include barring an individual from school premises.

Barring from the School Premises

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

If an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask him/her to leave school premises. In serious cases, the Headteacher or the local authority can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the person may wish to make. Schools should always give that person the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing. Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Chair of Governors. The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the person should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place and when the decision will be reviewed, usually after 6 months.

Complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to 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 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:

Article 5 – The Government should respect the rights of my family and help me to know about my rights.
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Definitions

School days are any school day between school hours during term time, excluding weekends, Bank Holidays and school inset days

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 Sharon Swan 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 panel will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the 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.

Panel Chair

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

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

Panel Member

Panel members should be aware that:

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

No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. Additionally, a parent Governor should not sit on the committee if they have a child in the same class, or know the parent personally.

- 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.