Kendrick School

Complaints Policy and Procedure

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Complaints Policy and Procedure

Preamble
Complaints about child protection matters are handled under the child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. The local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) may be contacted for serious concerns. Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.

Introduction
The school recognises the importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships with parents, carers and the wider community and wishes to provide a safe and happy environment for students to learn and to develop. There may however, 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 fairly, quickly and informally as possible.

Principles
Most complaints can be resolved satisfactorily by informal discussion either over the phone or through a meeting involving the key people involved. All formal complaints will be investigated fully, fairly and carefully and complainants kept informed of progress. The aim is always to secure a resolution of the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant if possible.

Who can make a complaint?
This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Kendrick School about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), this complaints procedure will be used.

There is a difference between a *concern* and a *complaint:*

A concern is '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought*'. It is likely to require a discussion between teacher, parent and student. If unresolved, it could become a complaint.
A complaint is '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*' that needs a response from the school.

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

Kendrick School understands that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the school will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this procedure.

A complaint is most likely to arise when there are issues relating to a student's physical or emotional well-being and security or when the school's stated values or aims are being ignored or are unsatisfactory. For example, parents/carers may complain if they consider the school is not doing one or more of the following. Other issues and areas of dissatisfaction are also valid.

- Providing a curriculum to meet the needs of their child
- Complying with the law on charging for school activities
- Providing religious education and daily collective worship
- Providing statutory information
- Carrying out a statutory duty
- Acting reasonably

Aims of the document:

- To set out guidelines which will enable good communication and relationships to be maintained between the School and persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint.
- To support the well-being of students, staff and everyone else who has legitimate interest in the work of the School, including Trustees and parents.
- To provide a clear and fair procedure for the resolution of concerns or complaints.
- Comply with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Schedule 1, Part 7 for dealing with complaints from parents of students.

Responsibilities of Kendrick School

As an academy, Kendrick School will :

- Offer an opportunity to resolve the concern or complaint on an informal basis.
- Give clear timescales for the management of complaints.
- Provide an opportunity to make and resolve the complaint on an informal basis e.g. through discussion with a senior member of staff
- Set out a formal procedure for the complaint to be made in writing when the complainant is not satisfied with initial informal outcomes
- Schedule a panel hearing to be set up by the academy trust when the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the written complaint. The panel must include at least three people (Trustees) who are not involved in matters detailed in the complaint. Parents, accompanied if they wish, must be able to attend the hearing.
- Allow for the panel to make findings and recommendations with a copy of the outcome information provided to the complainant and, if relevant, the person complained about. The outcome information must be available for inspection on the school premises.
- Maintain written records of all complaints including details of how they are resolved, and action taken by the academy as a result of the complaint
- Ensure records relating to individual complaints remain confidential except under certain circumstances including Secretary of State request and inspection

Responsibilities of the Headteacher

- Take all complaints seriously and deal with them sensitively
- Respond to the complaint personally or delegate it to an experienced member of the senior leadership team
- Involve other members of staff as appropriate
- Where necessary, explain the legal position with regard to the complaint and the scope available to the school to make changes
- Advise the complainant of their right to pursue the matter with the Trust Board

- Ensure the Trust Board is advised of any complaints and provided with guidance to assist the decision-making process

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

- A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.
- Complaints against school staff (except the head teacher) should be made in the first instance, to the head teacher directly via email and marked as 'Private and Confidential'.
- Complaints that involve or are about the head teacher should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees directly or via the Governance Officer clerk@kendrick.reading.sch.uk and marked as 'Private and Confidential'.
- Complaints about the Chair of Trustees, any individual trustee or the whole Trust Board should be addressed to the Governance Officer to the Trust Board directly and marked as 'Private and Confidential'.
- In accordance with equality law, the school 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
The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the head teacher or Chair of Trustees if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales
Complaints must be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. Complaints made outside of this time- frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time
Complaints made outside of term time will be considered 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 Kendrick School other than the following that are dealt with under other statutory procedures.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under the child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. The local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) may be contacted for serious concerns.
• 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 Relationships and Behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure. See separate policy*
• Whistleblowing	Please see the school's internal whistleblowing procedure for all 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. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about Kendrick School should complain through the school's complaints' procedure or directly to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of the complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• Statutory assessments of special education needs	Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should be raised directly with local authorities.
• Complaints about services provided by other suppliers who may use school premises or facilities	Complainants should follow the external provider's own complaints procedure for those hiring the academy facilities.
• Withdrawal from the curriculum	Parents and carers can withdraw their child from any aspect of Religious Education (RE), including the Daily Act of Collective Worship (DACW). They do not have to explain why. If parents or carers are not satisfied with the handling of a request to withdraw their child from RE or the DACW, they will be advised to follow the school's complaints procedure. The right of withdrawal does not apply to other areas of the curriculum where religious matters may be spontaneously raised by students or arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship.

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

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

Managing serial and persistent complaints
The Kendrick School will endeavour to be helpful to people who contact the school with:

- a complaint or concern

- a request for information

However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the school will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school may choose not to respond. However, the school will not mark a complaint as 'serial' before the complainant has completed the procedure.

Under no circumstances should a complainant be marked as 'serial' for exercising their right to refer their complaint to their MP, regardless of which stage the complaint has reached.

Kendrick School may receive complaints it considers to be vexatious. The characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint are:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value

Kendrick School will not refuse to accept further correspondence or complaints from an individual they have had repeat or excessive contact with. The application of a 'serial or persistent' marking should be against the subject or complaint itself rather than the complainant.

When to stop responding
The decision to stop responding will never be taken lightly and the following test applied – responding ‘yes’ to all of the following:

- has the school taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
- has the complainant been given a clear statement of the school’s position and the options
- has the complainant contacted the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case to stop responding is stronger if the school agrees with one or more of these statements:

- the complainant’s letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive
- the complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- the school hasreason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

The school will not stop responding just because an individual is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions.

Communication strategy for persistent correspondents

If an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption, regardless of whether or not they have raised a complaint, Kendrick School can implement a tailored communication strategy. For example:

- restrict the individual to a single point of contact via an email address
- limit the number of times they can make contact, such as a fixed number of contacts per term

However, regardless of the application of any communication strategy, Kendrick School must provide parents and carers with the information they are entitled to under The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005, within the statutory time frame.

Different procedures apply to freedom of information (FOI) and data protection (DP) correspondence. Kendrick School will seek guidance from FOI and DP advisors or approach the Information Commissioner's Office for further advice.

The school will need to make sure that it acts reasonably and considers any new complaint. Anyone has the right to raise a new complaint at any time and failure to respond could result in the school failing to act reasonably.

Kendrick School may suggest that the complainant asks a third party to act on their behalf, such as the local Citizen's Advice Bureau.

If an individual persists to the point that may constitute harassment, the school will seek legal advice. In some cases, injunctions and other court orders may be issued to individuals preventing them from contacting Kendrick School direct.

Once it has been decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, the school will inform the individual.

Barring from school premises
Although fulfilling a public function, academies are private places, and the public has no automatic right of entry. Kendrick School will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for students, staff and other members of its community.

If an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, the head teacher can ask them to leave school premises. In some cases, individuals can be barred from entering school premises. The individual will be given an opportunity to express formally their views on a decision to bar.

The head teacher's decision to bar should then be reviewed by either:

- the chair of Trustees
- a committee of Trustees

They should take into account any representations made by the individual and decide whether to either confirm or lift the bar. If the decision is confirmed, the individual should be notified in writing, explaining:

- how long the bar will be in place
- when the decision will be reviewed

Once the school's appeal process has been completed, individuals may be able to apply to the Courts. Individuals wishing to exercise this option should seek independent legal advice.

Responsibilities of the Department for Education (DfE)

Complaints should, in the first instance, be raised directly with the School and dealt with through the School's published complaints procedure.

Once the School's complaints procedure has been completed, a complainant who believes that the School has not handled their complaint correctly may refer the matter to the Department for Education (DfE). A complaint may also be referred to the DfE where the School has prevented the complainant from completing its complaints procedure.

The DfE's role is to consider whether the School has handled the complaint properly.

The DfE may consider whether the School:

- does not have a complaints procedure;
- has failed to provide a copy of its complaints procedure when requested;
- has a complaints procedure that does not comply with statutory requirements;
- has failed to follow its published complaints procedure; or
- has prevented a complainant from completing the complaints procedure.

Where the DfE identifies that a complaint has not been handled correctly, it may ask the School to take appropriate action, which could include amending its complaints procedure or reconsidering the complaint from an appropriate stage.

Certain matters fall outside the scope of this complaints procedure or may need to be referred to another body. These include matters relating to admissions appeals, exclusions, data protection, discrimination, examination malpractice, safeguarding and criminal matters, for which separate statutory procedures or appropriate external bodies may apply.

Further information about escalating a complaint to the Department for Education is available on GOV.UK.

https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Kendrick School will want to resolve the complaint and if appropriate, acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, the school 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 the school 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, written confirmation of this will be requested by the school.

Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal complaints and concerns

It is to be hoped that most complaints (an expression of dissatisfaction) or concerns (an expression of worry) can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.

Concerns or complaints should be raised with either the class teacher, year head (Pastoral Lead) / subject head (TLS) or Headteacher and acknowledged by the school within 5 working school days but preferably within 2 working school days.

Complainants should not approach individual Trustees to raise concerns or complaints since Trustees do not have 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 Headteacher or person designated to investigate the complaint will provide a response within 15 working schools days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Stage 2 – Formal complaints

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher). This may be done in person or in writing providing:

- details of the complaint
- how the complaint maybe resolved
- evidence

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 working school days.

Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify:

- the nature of the complaint,
- ask what remains unresolved
- 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 working 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 Kendrick 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 2.
If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the Trust Board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the Trust Board must be made to the Chair of the Trust Board.

If the complaint is:

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

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

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3. A panel hearing consisting of at least three people (Trustees) who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Governance Officer, via email within 10 working school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

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

Requests received outside of this time- frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
The Governance Officer will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 working school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Governance Officer will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Governance Officer 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 Trust Board or
- the majority of the Trust Board,

Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of independent, appointed Trustees.

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, it is not encouraged that either party bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 5 working school days before the meeting, the Governance Officer will:
- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 5 working school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 working 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 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 Kendrick School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 working 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 Kendrick 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 Kendrick 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 Headteacher.

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.

Next Steps and the Role of the Department for Education Where the School's complaints procedure has been completed and the complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complainant may refer the matter to the Department for Education (DfE). Further information about escalating a complaint to the DfE is available on GOV.UK.

https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Links to other policies:
Home school compact; Relationship and Behaviour policy; Uniform policy, Homework Policy, Whistleblowing Policy or any other related policy.

Equality statement
Kendrick School believes that all individuals and groups should receive equal access and opportunities to develop and learn. This procedure sets out to ensure that there is no discrimination against individuals or groups.

Monitoring/evaluation arrangements

The Headteacher will report to the Trust Board on complaints which reach the formal stages of the procedure, but individual complaints will not be discussed unless a panel of Trustees has been required to consider a complaint, in which case, the recommendations from the panel will be shared with the Trust Board.

Concerns relating to child protection

If, at any stage, a complaint raises concern that a member of staff may not be suitable to work with children, the Headteacher as the Designated Officer must be consulted together with any other HR procedure. In case of a complaint against the Headteacher, the Chair of Trustees must be consulted.

Independent advice and support

Parents and carers who would like independent advice or support in relation to an education concern or complaint may find the following organisations helpful:

- Reading Information, Advice and Support Service (Reading IASS) – provides free, impartial information, advice and support to children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers. Telephone: 0118 937 3421; email: iass@brighterfuturesforchildren.org.
- Child Law Advice – provides information and advice on education law to parents, carers and young people in England. Telephone: 0300 330 5485. Further information, including online advice, is available through the Child Law Advice website.
- Reading Borough Council – general information about local education and children's services is available through the Council's website or by calling 0118 937 3787.

Contact details and availability may change. Current information should therefore be checked directly with the relevant organisation.

Procedural 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 Governance Officer 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.

Governance Officer to the Trust Board
The Governance Officer acts as the principal point of contact for the complainant and the complaints panel and supports the fair and effective administration of the complaints procedure. The Governance Officer should:
- ensure that the complaints procedure is followed correctly and within the timescales set out in this policy;
- provide appropriate information about the complaints process to the complainant, panel members and others involved;
- arrange meetings and panel hearings and ensure that relevant documentation is circulated appropriately;
- ensure that appropriate records are maintained throughout the complaints process;
- support the panel in following a fair, impartial and transparent process; and
- ensure that information is handled appropriately and in accordance with relevant legal requirements, including the Equality Act 2010, Data Protection Act 2018, UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Complaints Panel Chair

The Chair of the complaints panel will be appointed in advance of the hearing and is responsible for ensuring that the hearing is conducted fairly, impartially and in accordance with this procedure. The Chair should ensure that:
- both parties are invited, through the Governance Officer, to submit any additional information relevant to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the hearing;
- the purpose and remit of the panel, and the procedure to be followed at the hearing, are clearly explained to the complainant and other participants;
- the hearing is conducted in a fair, respectful and non-adversarial manner and that all participants are given an appropriate opportunity to present their case and respond to relevant points;

- reasonable steps are taken to put complainants at ease, particularly where a child or young person is involved in the process;
- relevant written information is made available to the appropriate parties in advance of the hearing, subject to any necessary redactions or restrictions required to protect confidentiality, personal information or the rights of others;
- the panel remains focused on the matters within the scope of the complaint and does not consider unrelated matters; and
- information is handled appropriately in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

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

The School recognises 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.

Procedure for the Trust Board Complaints Panel.

The aim of the hearing will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant and be conducted as informally as possible. Any hearing must be seen to be independent and impartial and made up of a panel of Trustees from a wide-cross section of the community who are sensitive to issues of race gender and religious affiliations and familiar with the complaints' procedure. No trustee may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. The panel need to be aware that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour.

1. Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing, which they give their evidence.
2. After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint and be followed by witnesses.
3. The headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
4. The headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
5. The complainant may question both the Headteacher and witnesses after each has spoken.
6. The panel may ask questions at any point.
7. The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
8. The headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's action and response to the complaint.
9. Both parties leave whilst the panel decide the issues.
10. The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.
11. An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.
12. Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated.
13. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.