





Complaints Policy and Guidance

Stewart Headlam and Hague Schools Federation

2021- 2024



Approved by:	Resources Cttee  Main Governors  Chair of Governors	Date: 13 th October 2022 3 November 2022
Changes Last reviewed on:	<i>13th October red edits pg 8 & 9. Contacts for LADO and MASH Pg 4 details taken from Tower Hamlets Council Website.</i> 8 th July 2021	
Next full review due: by:	Reviewed Annually October 2023	

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This is a Stewart Headlam and Hague Schools Federation Policy. The term, 'school' applies equally to Stewart Headlam and Hague.

Email CONTACT DETAILS for Heads of School and Executive Head

Stewart Headlam:	Head of School, Nilufar Chowdhury	nchowdhury10.211@lgflmail.org
Hague:	Head of School, Sue Walsh	swalsh@hague.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Executive Headteacher:	Judy Knappett.	head@hague.towerhamlets.sch.uk

Chair of Governors: Mike Coleman can be contacted via the school office for Hague or Stewart Headlam

1. SHH Federation aims when responding to concerns and complaints

The school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents 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 by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect
- Ensure that any 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 or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed. The school aims to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

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

2. 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 the [Head of School](#) about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (see scope of complaints for further details), we will use this complaints procedure.

3. The difference between a concern and a complaint

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint.

A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”.

- The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.

A **complaint** is 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 for formal stages of the complaints procedure. The school takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern or complaint with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. The Head of School will refer you to another member of staff. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern the Head of School will refer

you to another member of staff. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case the Head of School will take steps to resolve the issue internally through the stages outlined in this complaints procedure.

4. The scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by **the school**. This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to the following exceptions as there are other statutory procedures:

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Tower Hamlets Council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Tower Hamlets Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Contact Melanie Benzie for allegations against professionals, school staff or volunteers. 020 7364 0677 07903 238827 LADO@towerhamlets.gov.uk</p> <p>If you have a concern about the welfare or safety of a child during the office hours of 9am-5pm, you should contact the Tower Hamlets MASH: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) 020 7364 3444 / 5601 / 5606</p> <p>Email: Mash@towerhamlets.gov.uk If a child is in immediate danger, please call the police on 999. Your responsibility is to report your concerns. A Social Worker will follow these up with any necessary investigations or assessment or alternatively contact:</p> <p>Emergency Duty Team (EDT) – Out of hours service Tel: 020 7364 4079 (after 5pm and at weekends).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances 	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's LA agreed grievance procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's LA agreed disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>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.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Curriculum - content 	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

5. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened; when, how and why.
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

We also intend to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage.

Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.

Complaints about our fulfilment of Early Years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint.

The school will keep a record of the complaint (see section 9) and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that the school is not meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by calling 0300 123 4234 or 0300 123 4666, or by emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. An online contact form is also available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>.

6. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

The concern can be raised in person, in writing or by telephone. It can also be raised by a third person if they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or Head of School. The matter will be investigated or delegated to an appropriate member of staff to investigate and resolve. 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 prevent them from considering complaints

at stage 2 of the procedure. *If approached they will explain and advise the person to contact the Head of School.*

Complaints against school staff (except the Head of School) should be made in the first instance to the Executive Headteacher, via the school office. Please mark them as private and confidential.

For ease of use, a template Complaint Form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office.

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 assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

7. Complaints against the Head of School, Executive Headteacher, a governor or the governing body

- Complaints that involve or are about the **Head of School or Executive Head** should be addressed to (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. 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 the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

8. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints, However the Executive Headteacher or chair of governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

9. Time scales

You must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident or where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents.

Where a series of incidents have occurred we will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

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

The school will verbally acknowledge informal concerns or complaints within [5] days, we will then aim to investigate and provide a response within [10] days.

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 in public bodies have completed their investigations.

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

10. Resolving concerns and complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the school wants to resolve the concern or 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 and changes will be made.
- an undertaking to review school policies in the light of the complaint
- an apology

11. Withdrawal of a complaint

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

12. Formal Complaint: Stage 1

How to raise a complaint

Formal complaints must be made to the Head of School, (unless they are about the Head of School), via the school office.

This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), by telephone or a third party acting on behalf of the complainant as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office.

The Head of School will record the date that the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing or by email within 5 school days.

The Head of School will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see.

The Head of School can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: the head of school may delegate the investigation to another member of the staff's senior leadership team, but not the decision to be taken.

The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting, and should inform the school of the identity of their companion in advance.

In certain circumstances, the school may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the school will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

During the investigation by the Head of School (or other person appointed for this purpose) will, if necessary

- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- Keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Head of School will provide a formal written response within <20 >school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Head of School 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 reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Hague School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Head of School will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint, including time frames, should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 1.

If the complaint is:

- **about the Head of School, Executive Head Teacher, 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 Head of School or Executive Headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

13. Formal Complaint: 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 – a meeting with 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 complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within < 20 > school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) **within < 5 > school days.**

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

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. **They will aim to convene a meeting within < 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 **Stewart Headlam** and Hague Schools Federation Governing Body available, the Clerk will source additional, independent governors through another local school or through the LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee.

Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

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

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least <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 <10 > 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 committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included.
- New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.
- The meeting will be held in private.

Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place.

Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

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

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

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

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

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and the school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within < 10 > school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school.

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, co-opted governors.

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 **the school** will take to resolve the complaint.

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

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board in writing within [5] days.

14. Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure

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 the school. They will consider whether the 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: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

15. Persistent complaints

Where a complainant tries to re-open the issue with the school after the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted and the school has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint, the chair of governors (or other appropriate person in the case of a complaint about the chair) will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.

If the complainant subsequently contacts the school again about the same issue, the school can choose not to respond. The normal circumstance in which we will not respond is if:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs, *and*
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any), *and*
- The complainant is contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time

However, this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

The school will be most likely to choose not to respond if:

- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience, and/or

- The individual's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive, and/or
- The individual makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, school staff

Unreasonable behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening may constitute an unreasonably persistent complaint.

Once the school has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, the complainant will be informed in writing, either by letter or email.

The school will ensure when making this decision that complainants making any new complaints are heard, and that the school acts reasonably.

Unreasonably persistent complaints

See SHH Schools Federation Policy for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints – section 24.

Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

16. Record-keeping

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and records management policy/record retention schedule.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the governing board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

17. Learning lessons

The SHH Federation Resources Committee will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Head of School where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, determine whether there

are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

18. Monitoring arrangements

The SHH Federation Resources Committee monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly.

- The Head of School will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 17.
- The complaints records are logged and managed by the Head of School and Executive Headteacher to be reported to SHH Federation Resources Committee
- This policy will be reviewed by the SHH Federation Resources Committee every 3 years or sooner subject to DfE guidance updates.
- At each 3 year review, the policy will be approved by the full governing body.

19. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Exclusions policy
- Tower Hamlets staff grievance procedures
- Tower Hamlets Staff disciplinary procedures
- SEND policy
- Privacy notices

20. 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 their 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 Department for Education (DfE).

It also refers to good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE).

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.



21. Complaint form Stage 1

Please complete and return to **the Head of School** who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken within 5 school days.

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

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

School:

Complaint referred to:

22. Complaint Stage 2

Request for Governing Board Review (Can only be completed after Stage 1 has been concluded)	
Your name	
School Student's name	
Relationship with the school student	
Address	
Telephone Numbers	
Email Address	
<p>Dear Sir / Madam</p> <p>I submitted a formal complaint to the school on:</p> <p>I am dissatisfied with the procedure that has been followed.</p> <p>My complaint was submitted to:</p> <p>I received a response from:</p>	
<p>I have attached copies of my formal complaint and of the response received</p> <p>Yes/ No</p>	
<p>I am dissatisfied with the way in which the procedure was applied because:</p>	

Please continue on separate paper if required and indicate the number of additional pages submitted
Signature Date

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? Please submit this form to the School Office

23. 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 calmly and politely 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 publishing 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 of School, Executive Headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Head of School, Executive 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 (this could be the Head of School or Executive Headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, 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 coordinator, 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.

24. SHH Federation Policy for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Note:

This policy can also be adapted to manage unreasonable or persistent contact not directly associated with, or resulting from, formal complaints.

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

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

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including

referral to the Department for Education

- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Head of School, Executive Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Head of School or Executive Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school.