



**Eden  
Primary**

# Complaints Policy

Status	Statutory
Last Reviewed	January 2021
Ratified	January 2023
Review Period & Due Date	January 2025

Under section 29(2) of the Education Act 2002, governing bodies of maintained schools must ‘have regard to any guidance given from time to time (in relation to England) by the Secretary of State’ when establishing and publishing complaints procedures relating to their school and any facilities or services the school provides. This policy has regard to the DfE’s [Best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures 2020, Updated 16 July 2020](#), and uses the [Model Complaints Policy \(Single Academy\)](#).

## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** The *Best practice guidance* stipulates that: *To be compliant with [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), the complaints procedure must consist of at least three stages:*

- 1. informal (usually a meeting with the complainant)*
- 2. formal (the complaint is put in writing)*
- 3. a panel hearing, with an independent panel member*

**1.2** The majority of issues raised by parents fit into the first stage listed above (‘informal’) and are concerns rather than complaints, as defined below. Eden Primary is committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, with the intention of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, parents may in some cases wish or be asked to follow the school’s formal complaints procedure. This policy describes the aims and procedures for making and dealing with concerns and complaints.

**1.3** The prime aim of Eden Primary’s policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the school. The following details outline the stages that we use to resolve complaints. Confidential written records will be kept of all complaints, indicating whether they were resolved at a preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing.

## **2. Who can make a complaint?**

**2.1** 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 Eden about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. A concern or complaint may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

### 3. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

**3.1** This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Eden, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions to schools</li> <li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>• School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul>	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the Headteacher or Inclusion Lead as appropriate.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO – <a href="mailto:lado@haringey.gov.uk">lado@haringey.gov.uk</a>) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the <a href="#">Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)</a>.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the <a href="#">Managing relationships and behaviour policy</a> can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal <a href="#">whistleblowing procedure</a> for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>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: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>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 Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances</li> </ul>	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal 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"> <li>• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct. The school should be informed of all such complaints.

**3.2** If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

**3.3** If a complainant commences legal action against Eden 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.

#### **4. The difference between a concern and a complaint**

**4.1** 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.'*

**4.2** 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. Eden takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

**4.3** **Concerns** can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The school requests that parents make their first contact with the class teacher. If the matter concerns a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), the concern should be raised with either the relevant member of the SLT or another member of the SLT if more appropriate, or with the Headteacher.

If parents have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, the school will respect their views. In these cases, the Headteacher will refer them to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer the parent to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be, and it may be the Headteacher herself who deals directly with the concern. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is the most important criterion in deciding who should take responsibility.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the Headteacher will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

## **5. How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

**5.1 A concern** can be raised in person, in writing or by telephone. Complainants **should not approach individual trustees** to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure. Concerns should be raised with the class teacher, a member of the SLT or the Headteacher.

**5.2 Complaints** against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in writing in the first instance, directly to the Headteacher. They should be marked as Private and Confidential.

**5.3 Complaints** that involve or are about the Headteacher should be made in writing and addressed to the Chair of Trustees (currently Professor Steve Miller) at [chair@edenprimary.org.uk](mailto:chair@edenprimary.org.uk). They should be marked as Private and Confidential.

**5.4** Complaints about the Chair of Trustees, any individual trustee or the full board of trustees should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. They should be marked as Private and Confidential.

**5.5** For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If complainants require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. They can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help them.

**5.6** 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.

## 6. Anonymous complaints

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

## 7. Time scales

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

**7.2** We will consider complaints made **outside of term time** but within the 6 month period from the date of the incident, to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

## 8. Resolving complaints

**8.1** At each stage in the procedure, Eden 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.

## 9. Withdrawal of a complaint

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

## 10. Stage 1 – Informal complaints

**10.1** It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis. As noted in 1.2 above, we view informal complaints as ‘concerns’. The procedure for raising concerns is given in 5.1 above.

**10.2** On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case the complainant will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. Concerns will be investigated by the Headteacher or an appropriate member of staff to whom they

delegate this task. The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if the matter is not resolved, the complainant should move to the Complaints procedure (Stage 2) within **15 working days**.

## **11. Stage 2 – Formal complaints**

**11.1** Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. This must be done in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), stating clearly that the communication includes a complaint.

**11.2** 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 of receipt of the complaint (where it has been received within the 6 month period but outside of term time then in accordance with 7.2 the relevant time period will start on the first school day after the holiday period). A copy of the acknowledgement and the complaints letter should be sent to the Chair of Trustees and the Clerk to the Board of trustees.

**11.3** Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this. Whenever this is the case and it is reasonably possible, the meeting with the complainant will take place within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.

*Note: The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's SLT 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.

**11.4** At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within fifteen school days of the date of receipt of the complaint or the meeting with the complainant (whichever is later).

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 Eden 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.

**11.5** If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the board of trustees (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2. The procedure adopted by this trustee will mirror that described for the Headteacher in paragraphs 11.2 to 11.4.

**11.6** As described in 5.3 above, complaints about the Headteacher should be made to the Chair of Trustees. The Chair of Trustees should then write to the complainant within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint and send a copy of the acknowledgement and the complaint letter to the Headteacher and the Clerk to the Board of trustees.

**11.7** Complaints about the Chair of Trustees, any individual trustee or the full board of trustees should be addressed to the Clerk to the Board of trustees, via the school office. If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire board of trustees or
- the majority of the board of trustees

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

## **12. Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

**12.1** If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a panel hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with at least one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school, sourced through the Clerk. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 3. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

**12.2** If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire board of trustees or
- the majority of the board of trustees

Then Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of trustees independent of the management and running of the school, sourced through the Clerk.

### **12.3 Preparation and timeline**

**12.3.1** The request to go to the Stage 3 Panel must be made in writing within 10 school days of the response at Stage 2 being sent to the complainant, addressed to the Headteacher and the Clerk to the Trustees (or in the case of a complaint against the Headteacher, to the Chair of Trustees and Clerk to the Trustees). Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if



exceptional circumstances apply. The request should specify reasons why the complainants are dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2.

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.

**12.3.2** The result of any previous investigations must be made available to the Clerk / Chair by the Headteacher or in the case of a complaint against the Headteacher, by the Chair of Trustees or a trustee in cases where the Chair of Trustees has delegated the investigation to them.

**12.3.3** The Panel should consider the complaint on the basis of the written evidence and set up a hearing to hear both parties. The Panel should use its discretion to decide whether to reconsider the issues raised in the original complaint or to confine itself to consideration of procedural issues.

**12.3.4** The Clerk/Chair of the Panel should write to the complainant to explain how the review will be conducted. The letter should be copied to the Headteacher or in the case of a complaint against the Headteacher or the Trustees, to the Chair of Trustees. It is open for the Chair of the Panel to meet with the relevant parties prior to the meeting.

**12.3.5** The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 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.

**12.3.6** At least 5 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 10 school days before the meeting.

**12.3.7** 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.

**12.3.8** 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.

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

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

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

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

## **12.4 The meeting**

**12.4.1** The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's 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. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Panel to ensure that the meeting is properly conducted. However, the proceedings should be as informal as possible.

**12.4.2** The Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, at the end of the meeting the Panel will need to issue a finding in writing either upholding or not upholding the complaint or upholding some parts and not others.

**12.4.3** If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interest of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to respond to the evidence. Late evidence of witnesses should not be accepted unless there is a good reason for the lateness.

### **12.4.4 The meeting:**

- Is not a court case and will be as informal as circumstances allow. The complainant will have the opportunity to put their reasons for dissatisfaction and to enlarge on them but may not introduce reasons that were not previously put in writing. The Headteacher or in the case of a complaint against the Headteacher, the Chair of Trustees or the trustee the Chair of Trustees has delegated the investigation to will have the opportunity to put its side of things and each side, as well as the Panel, will be able to ask questions.
- Should allow any party to bring witnesses (subject to the previously given approval of the Chair of Panel); and
- Should allow final statements from both the complainant and the Headteacher, or in the case of a complaint against the Headteacher, the Chair of Trustees to the Panel.

During the meeting, and whilst questions are being asked of the witnesses, the complainant the Headteacher or the Chair of Trustees or the trustee the Chair of Trustees has delegated the investigation to, the Clerk to the Trustees will have the authority to allow or disallow questions put by any party.

The Chair of the Panel, has the authority to terminate this part of the hearing if the questioning process degenerates to an unacceptable level in their opinion, or to continue without the parties being allowed to ask further questions and with all further questions being put by the Panel.

If any party is being particularly difficult or obstructive during the hearing, they can be asked to leave by the Chair of the Panel or the Clerk to the Trustees.

The Chair of the Panel should explain to the complainant and the Headteacher or in the case of a complaint against the Headteacher, the Chair of Trustees or the trustee the Chair of Trustees has delegated the investigation to, that the Panel will consider its decision, and a written response will be sent to both parties as soon as possible. The complainant, Headteacher or in the case of a complaint against the Headteacher, the Chair of Trustees or the trustee the Chair of Trustees has delegated the investigation to and any witnesses will then leave.

**12.4.5** The Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and reach a majority decision on the complaint.

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.

**12.4.6** The Chair of the Panel will provide the complainant and Eden with an explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 3 school days and if the complaint is upheld, where possible, the actions Eden will take to resolve the complaint.

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.

The response will detail provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Eden 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.

**12.4.7** 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.

### **13. Next Steps**

**13.1** If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the ESFA after they have completed Stage 3.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by [Eden](#). They will consider whether [Eden](#) has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

The complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit  
Education and Skills Funding Agency  
Cheylesmore House  
5 Quinton Road  
Coventry  
CV1 2WT

## Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

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

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

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

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**

## Roles and Responsibilities

### **Complainant**

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

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

### **Investigator**

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

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
  - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant 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 Headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss

the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

**Complaints Co-ordinator** (this could be the Headteacher/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, Headteacher, Chair of Trustees, 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 Board of trustees**

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

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

### **Committee Chair**

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

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy



- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

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

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

### **Committee Member**

Committee members should be aware that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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