



Our School is committed to providing the very best education for our young people and we want our pupils to be healthy, happy and safe and to do well. We recognise the importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships with parents, carers and the wider community. We are aware that there may 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 promptly, fairly and informally as possible.

School Governing Bodies are required under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 to have in place a procedure for dealing with complaints relating to the school. Sometimes when concerns are more specific, there are alternative and more appropriate policies for dealing with them. The following lists specific topics and the correct policy to refer to should you have a concern or complaint. You can access these policies on the School website or ask for a copy from the School office.

- Pupil admissions: please see the School's *Admissions Policy* or contact Kent County Council Admissions team
- Pupil exclusions; please see the school's *Behaviour Policy*
- Staff grievance, capability or disciplinary; these are covered by separate School Policies and Procedures
- Anonymous complaints: please refer to the School's *Whistleblowing Policy*
- Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests: please see the School's *Data Protection and Freedom of Information Policies*

Aims and principles of the policy

This policy aims to:

- encourage the resolution of concerns and complaints by informal means wherever possible
- ensure that concerns are dealt with quickly, fully and fairly within defined time limits wherever possible
- provide effective and appropriate responses to concerns and complaints
- maintain good relationships between the School and all those involved.

Where concerns are raised, the School intends these to be dealt with fairly, openly and promptly. The Governing Body has approved the following procedure which explains what the complainant should do if they have any concerns about the school.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints policy and procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Aldington Primary School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be considered.

General information

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. We take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Any complaint must be made within three months of an incident, or within three months of the last of a series of incidents.

If a complaint is the subject of legal action, or has been referred eg to the Local Authority or safeguarding team, this may affect the School's ability to respond within defined timescales or may result in consideration of the complaint being suspended.

Complaints made outside term time will be considered to have been received on the first day of term, after the holiday period.

At no time should complaints be discussed with individual governors. They have no power to act on an individual basis and an approach may mean that they cannot consider the complaint at a later stage.

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

Social media

All concerns and complaints will be dealt with confidentially by the School and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also. In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, we ask that complainants do not raise concerns or discuss them publicly via any social media platform.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

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

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. 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, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Aldington Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure. We will not, however, embark on the formal complaint route unless the complainant has previously contacted the school to initially discuss the issue as a concern. Under these circumstances, the school response to receipt of a formal complaint will be to ask for an informal meeting to discuss it as a concern.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person by parents, carers (including parents or carers of children no longer at the school) and members of the public, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

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

Mediation can:

- provide a helpful mechanism for discussion when a concern is raised
- help to rebuild the relationship between all parties

It should not be used as a substitute for an investigation during the formal stages of the complaints procedure. If neither the complainant nor the school considers that mediation will serve any practical purpose at this point, the complainant will not be prevented from moving to the next investigative stage of the complaints procedure. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

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

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the Clerk to the 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 Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

The clerk to Governors can also be contacted via email at clerk@aldington.kent.sch.uk.

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. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

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

Complaints received outside of term time

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

Recording complaints

Schools must ensure that they comply with their obligations under the Equality Act 2010. It is common practice to ask for complaints to be made using a complaint form or in writing, however the complainant may have communication preferences due to disability or learning difficulties and schools must allow alternative methods of contact:

- A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing, preferably using the complaint form (Appendix 1). Complainants should set out the issue, what remains unresolved, what they want to happen to resolve the issue. If needed, help with filling in the form can be given by the School Office.
- In order to prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls should be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record. Electronic recording devices should not be used unless a complainant's disability or special needs require it, to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point. Recordings may not be made without the knowledge and consent of those involved.
- Schools should record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. The headteacher or complaints co-ordinator should be responsible for these records and hold them centrally.
- Schools should be aware that complainants have a right to copies of these records under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.

Safeguarding

Wherever a complaint indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the School is under a duty to report this immediately to the Local Authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the School's safeguarding policy.

Complaints that result in staff capability or disciplinary

If at any formal stage of a complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary, the details of any action will remain confidential to the Headteacher and/or the individual's line manager. The complainant is not entitled to participate in the process or receive any detail about the proceedings.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Aldington Primary School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

The stages of the complaints process

Stage 1 - Formal complaint

Stage 2 - Consideration by a panel of governors

Stage 3 - Escalation to the Secretary of State for Education

These stages are explained below (*flowchart of process at appendix 2*).

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form including what actions you may feel might resolve the problem at this stage), or by telephone.

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

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

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

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

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

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

If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Aldington Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk to the Governors, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

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

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

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk to Governors via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

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

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

The Clerk will write to the complainant to 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 Aldington Primary School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through agreement with other CARE group schools, another local maintained school, local governing board members or governors and trustees from within academies or multi-academy trusts, or associate member of another governing body.

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

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

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

The Department for Education recognises there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate for instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this 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 7 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken. Schools are data controllers in their own right and have the discretion via their policies to decide for themselves whether to allow complainants to record meetings, if it's not required for the purposes of a reasonable adjustment.

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

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

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

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

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Aldington Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Aldington Primary School along with copies of the minutes.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or

- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors convened by the clerk from either impartial members of the Governing Board or from another CARE group school, local maintained school, local governing board members and governors/trustees from within academies or multi academy trusts, an associate member of another governing body or from an entirely independent committee. The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

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

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

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

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Aldington Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Aldington Primary School along with copies of the minutes.

Complaint campaigns

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

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

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

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

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

Stage 3

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 Aldington Primary School. They will consider whether Aldington Primary School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: 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.

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Our 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 the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Aldington Primary 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 while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on;
- 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, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
-
- behaves aggressively or maliciously
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
- knowingly provides false information;
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

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

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If the complaint is considered 'unreasonable', the complainant will be informed in writing that the complaint will not be responded to.

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

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

Barring from the School premises

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

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

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

Complaints Form

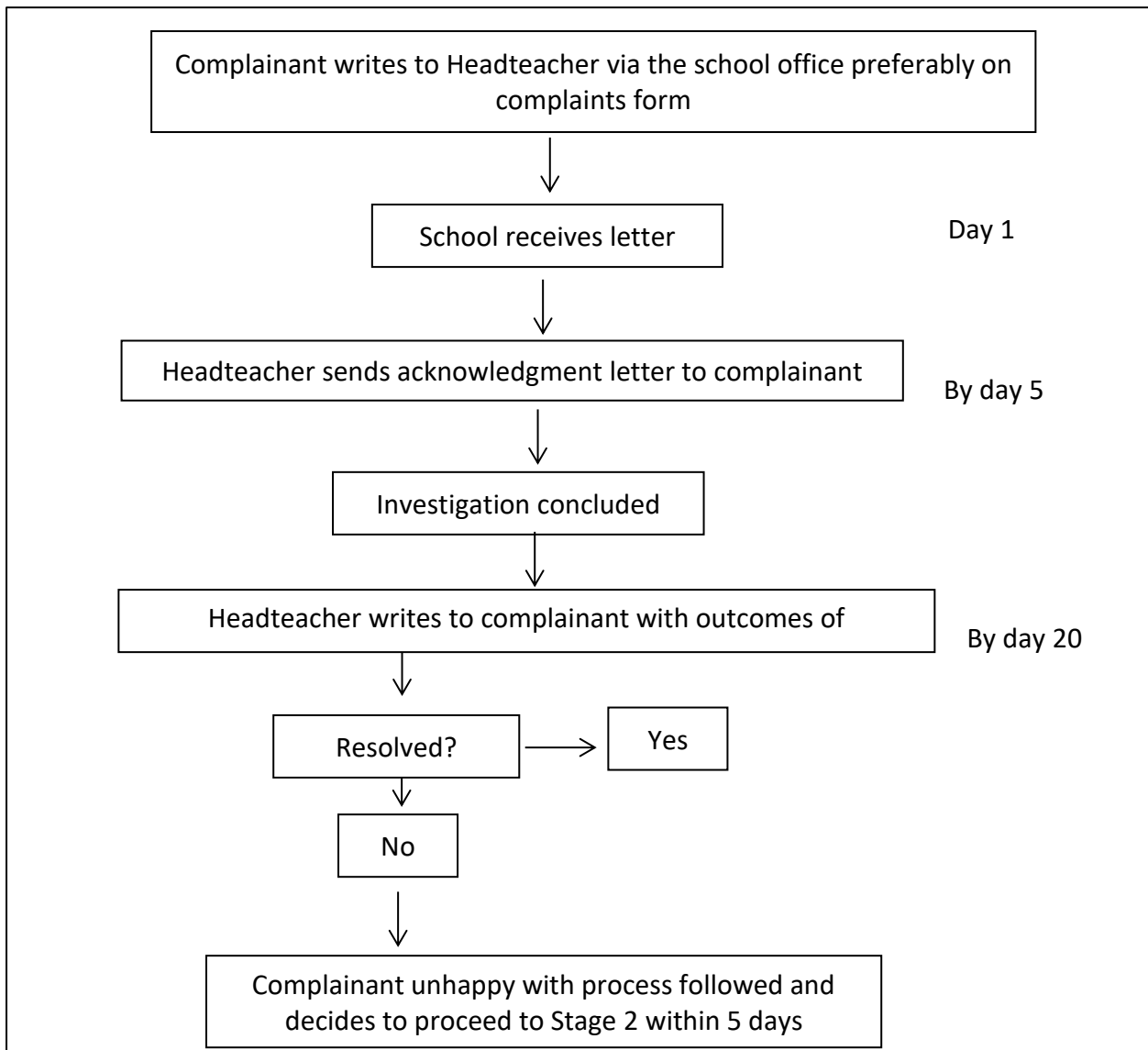
Appendix 1

Please complete and return to who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken	
Your Name	
Pupil's Name	
Your relationship to the Pupil	
Address	
Postcode	
Daytime Tel Number	
Evening Tel Number	
Please give details of your complaint here	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem?	
Are you attaching any paperwork?	
Signature	
Date	
For Office Use only	
Date acknowledgement sent	By Whom
Complaint referred to:	Date:

Complaints Procedure for Schools – Flowchart

Stage 1

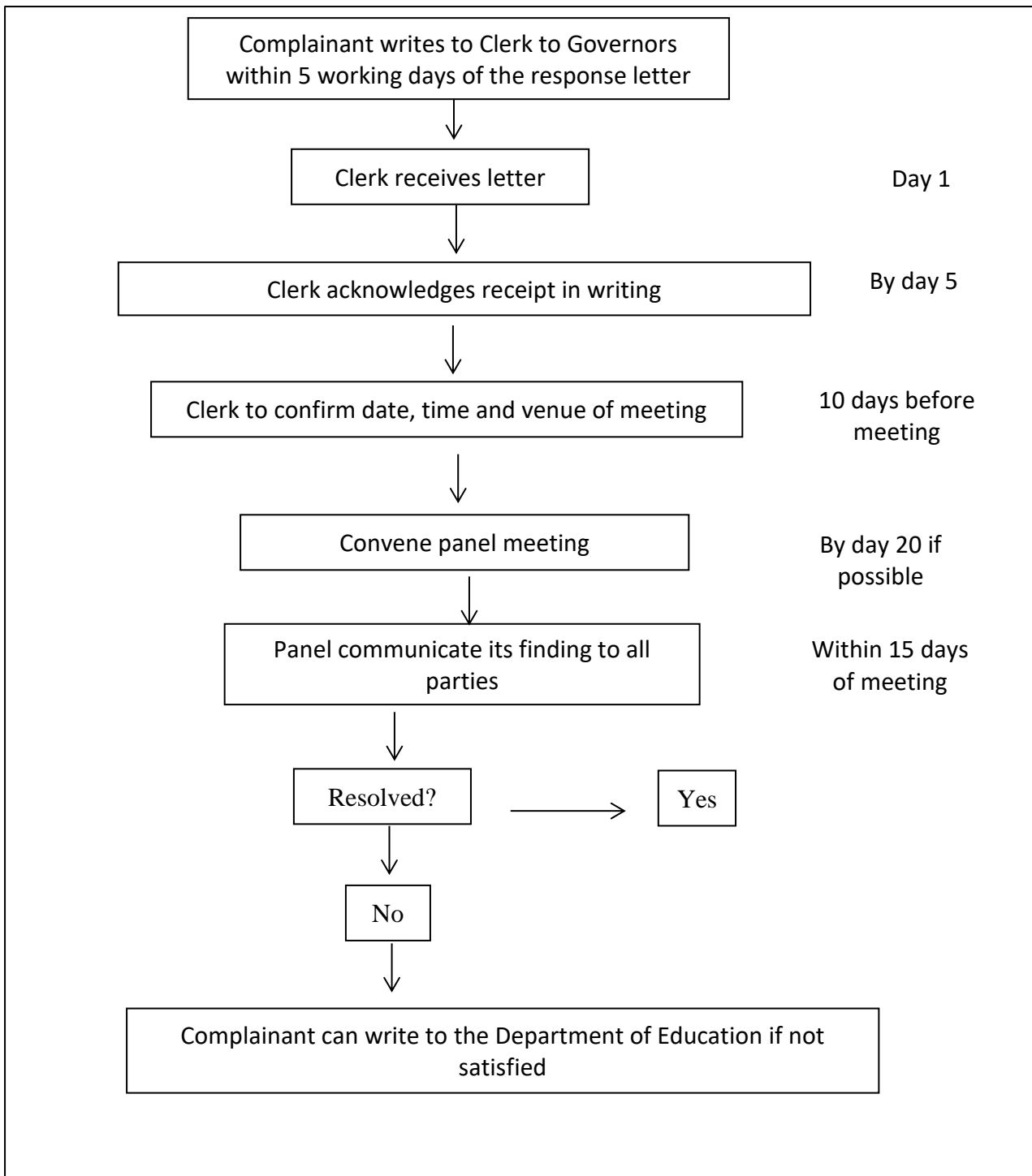
Formal Stage



Note:- If the complaint is about the actions of the Headteacher then the Chair of Governors carries out the Headteacher’s role as indicated above.

Days refer to working school day

Stage 2
Governors Review Panel



Note:- Days refer to working school day

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.

Headteacher (as Complaints Co-ordinator)

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 Governors, Clerk and Las (if appropriate) to ensure the

smooth running of the complaints procedure

- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information
 - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

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

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

Committee Chair

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

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

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

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself

- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

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

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

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

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

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

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

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

Interviewing Best Practice Tips

Children/young people

- Children/young people should be interviewed in the presence of another member of staff, or in the case of serious complaints (e.g. where the possibility of criminal investigation exists) in the presence of their parents/carers. However, it might not always be possible to conduct an interview in case it prejudices a LADO or police investigation.
- Care should be taken in these circumstances not to create an intimidating atmosphere.
- Children/young people should be told what the interview is about and that they can have someone with them.

Staff/Witnesses

- Explain the complaint and your role clearly to the interviewee and confirm that they understand the complaints procedure and their role in it.
- Staff are allowed a colleague to support them at their interview. The colleague must not be anyone likely to be interviewed themselves, including their line manager.
- Use open, not leading questions.
- Do not express opinions in words or attitude.
- Ask single not multiple questions, i.e. one question at a time.
- Try to separate 'hearsay' evidence from fact by asking interviewees how they know a particular fact.
- Persist with questions if necessary. Do not be afraid to ask the same question twice. Make notes of each answer given.
- Deal with conflicting evidence by seeking corroborative evidence. If this is not available, discuss with the complaints co-ordinator/ headteacher/ Chair of Governors the option of a meeting between the conflicting witnesses.
- Make a formal record of the interview from the written notes as soon as possible while the memory is fresh. Show the interviewee the formal record, ask if s/he has anything to add, and to sign the record as accurate.