



Helping Youth & Community from Start to Finish

OnTrak Community Initiative

Complaints Policy and Procedures

Approved By:	Adrian Woods
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Next Review Date by:	31 st August 2024

Who can make a complaint?

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

The difference between a concern and a complaint

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

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

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. OnTrak Community Initiative takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Operations Manager, Adrian Woods, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, Adrian Woods 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, OnTrak Community Initiative will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

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 setting) and members of the public, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with the Manager of year in the first instance. At this stage informal mediation may be offered. While this can be useful in helping the setting 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 setting 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 Trustees/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.

Complaints against setting staff (except the Manager / teacher) should be made in the first instance, to Adrian Woods or Natalie Kershaw via the setting office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Manager and/or teacher should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees (trustees@ontrakcommunity.org.uk), or written via the setting office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Trustees, any individual trustees or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Secretary via the setting 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 setting 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.

Anonymous complaints

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

Time scales

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

Complaints received outside of term time

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

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by OnTrak Community Initiative, 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"> Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs Setting re-organisation proposals 	<p>For concerns about admissions please see OnTrak's Admissions Policy. Policies & Documentation - OnTrak Community Initiative</p> <p>Special Educational Needs: The Complainant can use this policy to complain unless the Complainant's child has an Education Health and Care Plan and the Complainant wishes to appeal against a decision that the Local Authority has taken. If this is the case, the Complainant needs to contact the Local Authority.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freedom of Information 	<p>Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests: please see the Setting's Data Protection and Freedom of Information Policies</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from setting* 	<p>See OnTrak's Exclusion Policy. Policies & Documentation - OnTrak Community Initiative</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>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our setting should complain through the setting's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p> <p>Anonymous complaints: Please refer to the Setting's Whistleblowing Policy Policies & Documentation - On-Trak Community Initiative</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Staff grievance, capability or disciplinary; these are covered in our Behaviour Policy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the setting'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"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use setting premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

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.

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

If a complainant contacts OnTrak Community Initiative again in relation to their complaint, the correspondence may then be viewed as ‘serial’ or ‘persistent’ and OnTrak Community Initiative will not respond but will continue to complete the initial complaints procedure in full.

Duplicate complaints

After closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, if the setting receive a duplicate complaint from:

- a spouse
- a partner
- a grandparent
- a child

The setting will inform the new complainant that the setting has already considered that complaint and the local process is complete. The setting should advise the new complainant to contact the Department for Education should they be dissatisfied with the setting’s handling of the original complaint.

Any new aspects to the original complaint will be investigated and dealt with to the full extent of the complaints procedure.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, OnTrak Community Initiative 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 setting policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Manager / Teacher (unless they are about the Manager or Teacher), via the setting 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 Manager / Teacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 setting days.

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

Note: The Manager / Teacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the setting's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Manager / Teacher (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 Manager / Teacher will provide a formal written response within 20 setting days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Manager / Teacher 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 OnTrak Community Initiative will take to resolve the complaint.

The Manager / Teacher 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 Manager / 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 Manager / Teacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Chair of Trustees, via the setting 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 body or depending on the nature of the complaint and in the case of settings with a church foundation support could be sought from the Diocese to provide an impartial investigator. 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, Trustees available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Chair or Secretary of the Trustees via the setting office, within 5 setting days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Chair / Secretary will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 setting 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 setting 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 Trustees 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 Trustees from OnTrak Community Initiative available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent Trustees through another local maintained setting, local governing board members or Trustees from within academies or multi-academy trusts, or associate member of another governing body.

Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2. Complainants can request an independent complaints committee if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. Complainants should provide the Chair with evidence of bias in support of their request. The Governing Body will err on the side of caution if the appearance of bias may be sufficient to taint any decision reached.

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 setting bring legal representation. These committees are not a form of legal proceedings. The aim of the Trustees 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.

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 > setting 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 > setting days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least < 5 > setting 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. Settings 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 setting's systems or procedures to prevent

similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and <OnTrak Community Initiative> with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within < 15 > setting 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 <Setting> 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 Trustees / individuals convened by the Secretary from impartial members of society but ideally from our academies or multi academy trusts (academy Trustees should seek guidance and understanding from the clerk on the different legislative framework that may need to be taken into consideration during the complaint's hearing at the appeal stage), 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 OnTrak Community Initiative with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 setting 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 OnTrak along with copies of the minutes.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the setting 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 OnTrak Community Initiative. They will consider whether OnTrak

Community Initiative 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.

Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints

OnTrak Community Initiative is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. Anyone has the right to raise a new complaint at any time. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the setting. 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 setting defines unreasonable complaints as *'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact with the setting, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'*.

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

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

- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the setting'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 setting time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

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

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

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

Whenever possible, the Manager / Teacher or Chair of Trustees will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking including suggesting that the complainant asks a third party to act on their behalf such as the local Citizen' Advice.

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

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

Barring from the Setting Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, Settings are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Settings 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 setting can ask him/her to leave setting premises. Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Chair of Trustees. The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the person should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place and when the decision will be reviewed, usually after 6 months.

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

Concern Form

Please complete and return to Adrian Woods at OnTrak's office or adrian.woods@ontrakcommunity.org.uk who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Student's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the student (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your concern, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the setting about it.

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Concern referred to:

Date:

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Adrian Woods at OnTrak's office or email adrian.woods@ontrakcommunity.org.uk who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Student's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the Student (if relevant):
Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your concern, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the setting about it.

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

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

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 setting 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 or other forms of 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 Manager / Teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Manager / Teacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator (If you are using a Complaints Co-ordinator this could be the Manager / Teacher /clerk 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, Manager / Teacher, Chair of Trustees, Secretary 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.

Secretary to the Governing Body

The Secretary 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 setting 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, setting 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 Secretary) 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 setting are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions in 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 setting 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 setting 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.