



GRANBY

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Complaints Policy

Approved by	Pay and Personnel Committee
Date	Summer 2024
Next review due	Summer 2025

Role and responsibilities

Headteacher	Mr Dale Cross
Complaints Coordinator	Ms Sue Foreman
Clerk to Governors	Ms Sue Foreman
Chair of Governors	Mrs Abbey Stewart

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Granby 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.

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 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. Granby Primary School takes concerns and complaints 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 school complaints coordinator will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the school complaints coordinator 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, Granby Primary School 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 can be raised in person, by telephone, in writing or by e-mail. A third party can act on behalf of the person raising a concern, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should initially be raised with either the class teacher, the phase leader or the headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

A complaint must be made in writing or by e-mail. If you require support with putting your complaint in writing, please contact the school complaints coordinator who will arrange for someone to assist you with this. A third party can act on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Those raising a concern or making a complaint should not approach individual governors. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stages 3 or 4 of the complaints procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should initially be addressed 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 chair of governors, via the school office. Please mark them as 'private and confidential'.

Complaints about the chair of governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the clerk to governors, via the school office. Please mark them as 'private and confidential'.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school complaints coordinator. 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 making a formal complaint; or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Anonymous complaints

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

Time scales

You must make a 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.

At Stages 2, 3 and 4 of this complaints procedure, specific time frames are identified for actions to be taken by both the complainant and the school. These are calculated in full school days. For example, if a complaint is received at any point during the school day on Monday, this will be acknowledged by the end of the school day on Thursday (three full school days later). For the purposes of this policy, it is understood that a school day ends when the office closes at 4:45 p.m.

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.

Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Granby Primary School, 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">• Admissions to schools• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs• School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Leicester City Council.

	<p><u>Their details are as follows:</u> Comments, Compliments and Complaints, Customer Services, Leicester City Council FREEPOST (LE985/33), City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ</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> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p> <p><u>Their details are as follows:</u> LADO 0116 454 2440 lado-allegations-referrals@leicester.gov.uk MASH 0116 454 1004</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*NB: Complaints about the application of Granby's restorative wellbeing and behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>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 school should complain through the school'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>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<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"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school 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 Granby Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Granby 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.

Stage 1: Raising a concern

On many occasions, minor concerns can be resolved by speaking to the appropriate member of staff. This is usually, but not always, the pupil's class teacher. Except in minor matters, the concern and any action taken will be logged in the pupil's file. Where a concern is raised by a member of the public, records of the concern and any action taken will be held with the relevant manager.

If the person first contacted cannot deal with the concern immediately or is not the most appropriate person to deal with it, they will refer the matter to the most appropriate member of the school leadership team available at the time. The complainant can also request that their concern is referred to a specific member of staff, whilst still keeping the matter at this informal stage.

In certain circumstances, a member of the school leadership team or the headteacher may personally decide to deal with concerns informally at Stage 1.

If the concern relates to the headteacher, the complainant can contact the headteacher to enable the concern to be resolved informally. If this is not possible or the concern cannot be resolved informally, the complainant should contact the chair of governors, who will investigate the concern under Stage 2 of this policy instead of the headteacher.

The person dealing with the concern must make clear to the complainant what action or monitoring of the situation will take place. Where appropriate, this will include what action will be taken in response to the concern and could include an explanation, a specific outcome, an apology, or a revision of procedure. This will only be put in writing to the complainant if it seems the best way of making points clear.

Where no satisfactory solution has been found, or if the member of staff considers the concerns raised should be dealt with as a formal complaint immediately, the complainant will be advised that they should put their concern in writing under Stage 2 of this policy.

Stage 2: Making a complaint

Formal complaints must be addressed to the headteacher, unless they are about the headteacher in which case they should be addressed to the chair of governors. Complainants should seek to be specific about the nature of their complaint, i.e. exactly what it is they are unhappy about, and how they feel this can be resolved. Complaints must be submitted in writing or by e-mail (preferably on the template complaint form included at the end of this procedure). If you require support with putting your complaint in writing, please contact the school complaints coordinator who will arrange for someone to assist you with this.

The headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or e-mail) within 3 school days. Within this response, the headteacher may seek to further 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.

NB: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school 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 15 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 that Granby 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 2.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, the chair of governors will complete all the actions at Stage 2. If the complaint is about 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 2.

Complaints about the headteacher or a member of the governing body must be made to the clerk to 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 2 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 3: Review by chair of governors or designate

A request for a review of the Stage 2 decision by the chair of governors, or designate, should be made in writing within 5 school days of receipt of the outcome letter.

The complainant should not repeat the matters raised in their original letter or attach documentation already provided, but should clearly set out why they do not accept the findings made under Stage 2, and how they feel this matter could be resolved.

The chair of governors, or designate, will acknowledge the request in writing within 5 school days of receipt. The letter will give a brief explanation of the review procedure as outlined in this policy, and confirm a date for providing a response. This will normally be within 20 school days. If it is not possible to comply with this time limit, a letter will be sent to the complainant explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.

The chair of governors, or designate, will be provided with all relevant paperwork relating to the complaint. The chair of governors, or designate, should focus on deciding whether the findings and conclusion under Stage 2 were reasonable, making specific reference to any points raised by the complainant. Should the chair of governors, or designate, require further clarification, they may (but do not have to) speak to the complainant, pupils (who will be accompanied), or members of staff during the course of the review.

The chair of governors, or designate, must keep a written record of any meetings or telephone conversations, and must retain any other relevant documentation. Pupils or members of staff interviewed will be asked to read, sign and date the written record to confirm that it is accurate. In the case of pupils, the adult present at the meeting will also be asked to sign and date the record of the conversation.

Once the review has been completed, the chair of governors, or designate, may (but does not have to) meet with the complainant to discuss or resolve the matter directly. The complainant can be accompanied at any such meeting. This meeting may result in an agreed outcome, which the chair of governors, or designate, will subsequently confirm in writing and the complaint would then be considered resolved.

The chair of governors, or designate, will provide a written response which will set out whether they agree with the findings and conclusion under Stage 2, and give reasons, as well as responding to any concerns about the Stage 2 investigation. Where appropriate, this will include what action will be taken to resolve the complaint and could include an explanation, a specific outcome, an apology, or a revision of procedure.

The letter will inform the complainant that, if they are unsatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 3 review, they should write to the clerk to governors within 5 school days of receiving the outcome letter to request a governors' complaints committee hearing, under Stage 4 of this policy.

Stage 4: Governors' complaints committee hearing

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 3 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 4. This is a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 4 must be made to the clerk to governors, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 response.

The clerk to governors will record the date the request is received and acknowledge receipt of the request in writing (either by letter or e-mail) within 3 school days.

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

The clerk to governors 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 4 request. If this is not possible, the clerk to governors 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 to governors 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 Granby Primary School available, the clerk to governors will source additional, independent governors through another local school in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 4.

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

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

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

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

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 5 school days before the meeting, the clerk to governors 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 4 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

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

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

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

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

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

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

The chair of the committee will provide the complainant and Granby Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 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 Granby Primary School.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the chair and vice chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 4 will be heard by a committee of independent, co-opted governors.

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

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

Next steps

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 4.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Granby Primary School. They will consider whether Granby 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.

Misconceived or otherwise unreasonable complaints

Granby Primary School reserves the right, in exceptional cases only, to write to the complainant informing them that their complaint is regarded as misconceived or otherwise unreasonable and that the school's complaints procedure will not be followed. The sections below detail complaints which may be considered as misconceived or otherwise unreasonable. Appendix 3 defines what will be considered as unreasonable behaviour by complainants.

Repeated or vexatious complaints

A complaint which has been considered under all stages of this procedure and is raised again, may be defined as a repeated complaint by the school. Unreasonable persistent complaints, trivial complaints, and/or complaints that do not affect the complainant may be regarded as vexatious by the school and dismissed.

Unclear or ill-defined complaints

As outlined above, complainants are asked to be specific about the nature of their complaint and how they feel this can be resolved. Where a complaint is unclear or ill-defined, the headteacher, chair of governors or their delegate will correspond with the complainant to seek further information. Should satisfactory clarification of these matters not be received within 5 school days of it being requested, the complaint will be regarded as unreasonable by the school and dismissed.

Late complaints

Where a complaint is submitted more than 3 months after the incident or event (or where the complaint relates to a series of incidents or events, more than 3 months from the date of the latest incident or event) it may be regarded as unreasonable by the school. Requests received outside of this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

In any of the above cases, the complainant is entitled to write to the chair of governors asking for them to review the decision to regard the complaint as misconceived or otherwise unreasonable. The chair of governors, or designate, will respond to such a request within 10 school days of receiving it confirming the outcome of their review. The chair of governors, or designate, will not investigate the complaint itself during this review.

If the chair of governors, or designate, quashes the decision not to investigate the complaint, it will be referred to the school to be dealt with under this complaints policy in the usual way. If the chair of governors, or designate, upholds the decision not to investigate the complaint, the complainant may refer the concern or complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Anonymous or fictitious complaints

Granby Primary School will not investigate anonymous complaints, or those found to be fictitious, under the procedure in this complaints policy. Anonymous or fictitious complaints will be referred to the headteacher who will decide what, if any, action should be taken.

Record keeping

Granby Primary School will keep a record of all concerns and complaints received and their outcomes, whether or not they were dealt with formally or informally.

The school will keep all correspondence and documentation relating to individual concerns or complaints confidential, except as outlined above and where the Secretary of State or a body conducting a school inspection requests access to them.

Complaint form

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

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

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

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

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 coordinator, 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 coordinator

The complaints coordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- liaise with staff members, headteacher, chair of governors, clerk to governors 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 governors

The clerk to governors is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaints 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 governors) 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.

NB: 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 to governors (and complaints coordinator, if the school has one).

Committee member

Committee members should be aware that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Serial and unreasonable complainants

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

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

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on;
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, by telephone, in writing or by email and while the complaint is being dealt with;
- uses threats to intimidate;
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
- knowingly provides falsified information;
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by phone, text, letter or email), as it 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 behaviour continues, the headteacher or chair of governors will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, they may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the headteacher or chair of governors will immediately inform the police and communicate their actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school grounds and premises.