Bilton CofE Junior School
Bilton Infant School
Bawnmore Community Infant School

BILTON COMMUNITY FEDERATION COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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Governance Professional	Mrs J Jarman	Email: joannejarman@warwickshire.gov.uk Telephone: Via school office

This policy has been created taking into account the guidance from Warwickshire County Council, the Department of Education and the legislative requirements as laid out in the Education Act 2002, Section 29.

THIS POLICY DIRECTLY LINKS TO OUR COMPLAINTS POLICY WHICH CAN BE FOUND ON OUR SCHOOL WEBSITES.

POLICY APPROVAL	
Statutory, recommended, or additional policy	**STATUTORY**
Policy review cycle	**2 YEARLY (BIENNIAL)**
Policy reviewed by	**E Newton (Executive Headteacher)** **N Brown (Head of School – BJS)** **P Davey (Head of School – BAWN)** **C Fawbert (Head of School – BIS)** **L Moor (Chair of Governors)**
Policy review date	**01/09/2026**
Date of next review	**Sept 2028**
Date approved by Governing Body	**24/09/2026**

Introduction

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 Complaint Procedure.

It is our aim that our policies and procedures reflect our vision and values as a federation.

Vision: 'Empowering children to make a positive impact on the world.'

Values: Care, Honesty, Respect, Co-operation, Forgiveness and Resilience

Our school takes informal concerns seriously and makes every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible and provide any reassurances that may be necessary. However, there are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. In these cases, school will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint procedure.

Our school aims to foster and maintain positive relationships with parents and carers through a timely response to all concerns.

Our school governors want to ensure that potential complainants feel able to raise concerns with members of staff without formality, either in person by telephone or in writing. This allows staff to establish whether a person is asking a question, expressing an opinion, or making a complaint. The member of staff who deals with the initial contact will:

- clarify the nature of the concern and reassure the complainant that we want to hear about it
- resolve the concern immediately if the member of staff can do so
- record the enquiry and any agreements made and notify the Head of School

If the Complainant has difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect their views and, in these cases, the Head of School will refer them to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Head of School will refer the concern 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.

If the member of staff cannot resolve the concern, they will:

- make a clear note of the name, contact address and telephone number together with details of the nature of the concern and the outcome the complainant is looking for
- refer the concern to the Head of School, or more appropriate person

The staff member dealing with the concern will ensure that the Complainant is kept informed of any action taken. The emphasis at this stage is on resolving the issue quickly and informally for the benefit of pupil, parents / carers, and staff.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally and, in this case, we will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within our Complaints Procedure.

Complaints Procedure Flowchart

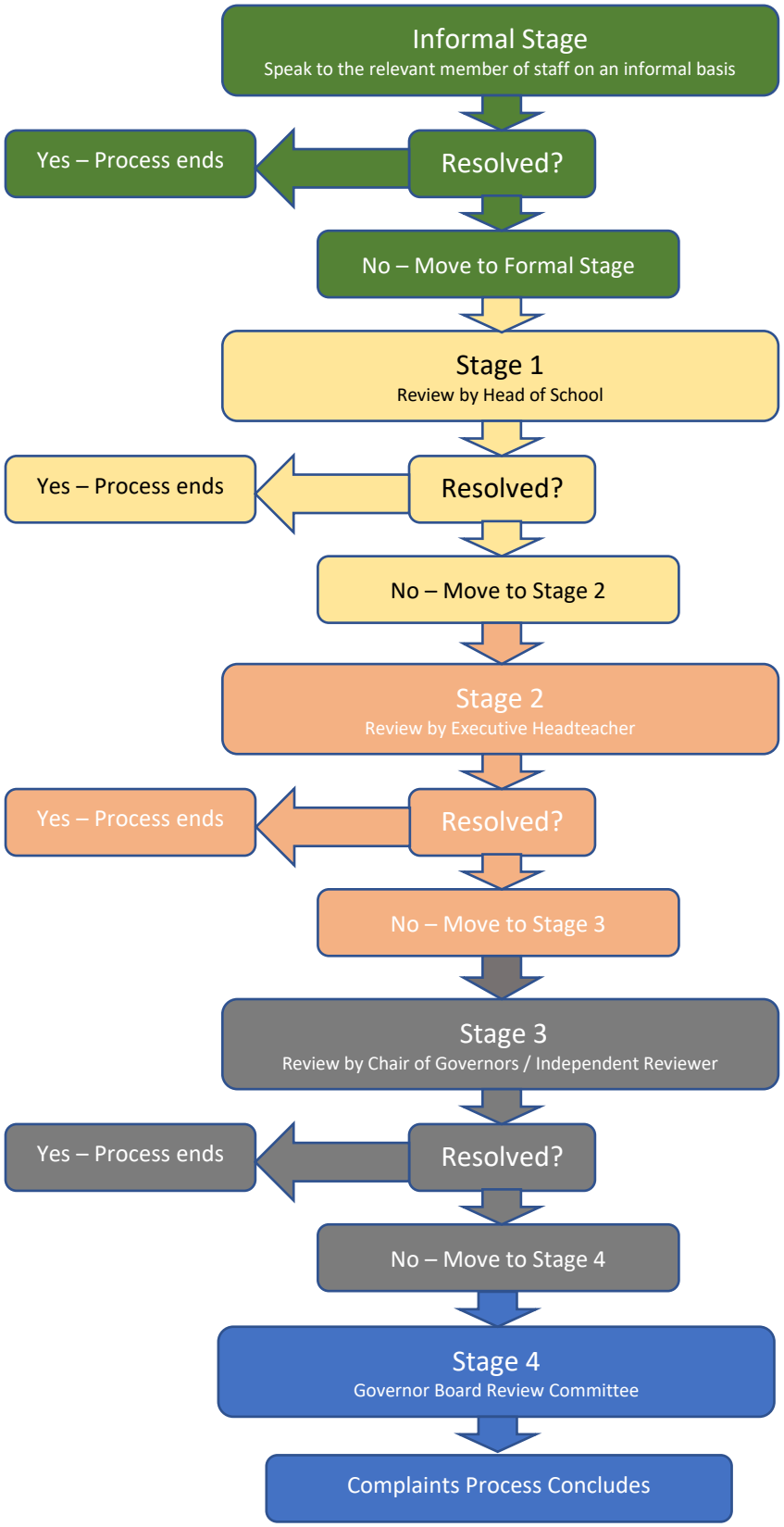
Most complaints can be resolved at this stage by listening and taking simple steps to effective resolutions without making things too formal.

Heads of School know your school and child best and can usually solve a complaint at this stage through their reviews.

If your complaint is about the Head of School, go to Stage 2, where the Executive Headteacher can review your concerns.

If your complaint is about the Executive Headteacher or an individual governor, go to Stage 3 where the governors will get involved in reviewing your concerns.

This is the final stage of the complaints process for the more complex complaints that can't be resolved sooner.



The federation knows how important face to face conversations on an informal basis are to facilitating mutually beneficial outcomes to complaints. As such they reserve the right to attempt to resolve any concern or complaint through conversation at any stage of the complaint's procedure.

Informal Stage

The intention of the school is to create and maintain a safe, happy, and healthy learning environment and the staff and governors seek to establish a spirit of cooperation with parents, carers, and other interested parties to ensure that a positive school community ethos is established to achieve and maintain this.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve concerns at the earliest stage and the school's experience is that many issues can be resolved by proactive and timely discussion between the appropriate people. The school will take informal concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter quickly and effectively. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

To assist this the concern or complaint should be made either in person, in writing (including email), or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant if they have appropriate consent to do so. This consent to act on behalf of another must be evidenced to the school before any progress is made towards a resolution.

- It is recommended that the complainant makes an appointment to speak to the relevant person, which would usually be the Class Teacher at this stage, as soon as possible as this will give both parties the opportunity to talk about the issue without being interrupted

- It is important to recognise that schools are busy organisations and may not be able to offer an appointment straight away

- The purpose of this meeting should be to establish the nature of the concern and to seek a resolution to the problem

- To prevent any later challenges or disagreements over what was said, it is good practice for the employee of the school to make brief written notes of meetings and telephone calls and a copy of any written response should be added to the record. These notes are kept securely on the school's ICT system.

- They may need to talk to others before they can respond. The Complainant should be given a timescale for a response; no more than 5 school days.

If the person with the concern has difficulty discussing it with a particular member of staff, we will respect their views. In these cases, the Head of School will decide on who should deal with the concern.

Similarly, if the member of staff feels that they are not the best person to be dealing with it, they will refer it to the Head of School for a decision on who should deal with the concern.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to discuss it informally with a more senior member of staff. This could include the Assistant Head, SENCO, Head of School or Executive Headteacher.

The member of staff dealing with a concern will make a written record of the issues raised, the action taken and, at the conclusion of their investigation, will provide an informal but considered written response within 5 school days of the date of the complaint. All documentation relating to the informal complaint will be retained in a central record.

Most concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if the complainant is not happy with the informal approach, then a formal complaint must be made to the Head of School *(unless they are about the Head of School)* via the school office, giving the reasons for the continued concern.

If the concern or complaint is not resolved informally and before it is escalated to a formal complaint the next step *could be* to offer mediation.

Sometimes during the handling of a complaint, communication between the complainant and the school can become difficult. Mediation can be a very useful way of helping people to resolve their differences and find an agreed way forward. Both parties need to agree to mediation. The school (or the complainant) may suggest mediation if communication becomes a problem.

The school may use someone independent from the school to investigate a complex issue or to facilitate a mediation meeting although many Chairs of Governors and other governors already have the skills to conduct a mediation process between the School Representative and Complainant.

Mediation can be sought at any point during the processes of resolution and investigation. The mediation process is informal, impartial, and voluntary, and aims to resolve conflicts to the benefit of all. It does not apportion blame and concentrates on developing a better understanding of each other's point of view and works to secure future relationships.

If mediation is not an option and the complainant considers that the School Resolution has not delivered a satisfactory conclusion, they should submit a request in writing to the Head of School outlining the reasons for a formal investigation.

Stage 1 – Review by Head of School or Investigating Officer

This stage does not apply to complaints against the Head of School, Executive Headteacher, a Governor or the Governing Board.

The Head of School may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team (Investigating Officer)

Formal complaints can be made either in person, in writing using the school's complaint form, by email, or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant if they have appropriate consent to do so. This consent to act on behalf of another must be evidenced to the school before any progress is made towards a resolution.

A Complaint Form is included at the end of this document which may be used. If help is required in completing the form, please contact the school office. Alternatively, help can be sought from third party organisations such as Citizens Advice.

The complainant should set out clearly the nature of their complaint, any unresolved issues, including relevant dates and full names of persons involved, and clarify what action they believe would resolve the issue – any acknowledgement that the school could have handled the situation better is not an admission of unlawful or negligent action. Any documentation should be attached to the complaint.

The complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 school days of date of receipt. The acknowledgement letter will confirm the date that the formal complaint was received, the action to be taken and the specified time limit. It will also specify who has been appointed as the Investigator (person appointed by the Head of School for this purpose).

The Investigator will be a senior member of staff who has no prior involvement with the complaint.

The Head of School or Investigator will consider the complaint and in doing so will:

- Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- Meet or contact the Complainant if they need further information
- Clarify how the Complainant may feel things could be put right (if this has not been set out in their letter or included on the Complaints form)

- Interview those involved in the matter and those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Conduct any interviews with an open mind
- Keep notes of any interview for the record

The complainant will be offered the opportunity to meet with the Investigator and to be accompanied by a friend or relative not acting in a legal capacity to speak on their behalf or help them make their case. The complainant should inform the school of the identity of their companion in advance of the meeting.

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

The Investigator will interview relevant witnesses and take statements from those involved.

These will be dated and signed.

If the complaint involves a pupil, they should also be interviewed, normally with a parent/carer present. In some cases, however, this may not be possible and a member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable will attend the interview.

To prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, the Investigator will keep brief notes of meetings and telephone conversations and a copy of any written response. These notes will be kept securely.

Outcomes to a complaint may include:

- An apology
- An explanation
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken, or will be taken, to ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- A finding that the complaint requires no further action
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better (this is not the same as an admission of negligence)
- An undertaking to review school policies, practices, and procedures in light of the complaint
- A finding that there is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion such that the complaint cannot be upheld

It may also be the case that the complaint may not have any substance and is therefore considered to be unfounded or unsubstantiated.

Once all facts are established, within a maximum of 15 school days (excluding those that fall in the school holiday) a written response confirming the outcome of the investigation will be sent to the complainant.

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 which the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The letter will inform the complainant if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, and they wish to escalate their complaint to Stage 2 (the next stage of the procedure) they should inform the Executive Headteacher, via the school office within 10 school days of the date of the formal written response, explaining their reasons for dissatisfaction and explaining why they are choosing to escalate this from a Stage 1 investigation.

If a written response is received after the 10 school days as requested, the Executive Headteacher will make the decision as to whether to allow the complaint to be escalated to Stage 2.

Where a complaint is received during a school holiday or within 20 days from the start of the Christmas, Easter, or summer holidays, the Head of School will endeavour to expedite the investigation wherever possible.
Where a time limit cannot be complied with, the school will write to the complainant within the specified time limit setting out the reasons why the time limit cannot be complied with and confirm the new time limit which will apply.

The federation knows how important face to face conversations on an informal basis are to facilitating mutually beneficial outcomes to complaints. As such they reserve the right to attempt to resolve any concern or complaint through conversation at any stage of the complaints procedure.

Stage 2 – Investigation by Executive Headteacher

Complaints at this stage are where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 - Review by Head of School / Investigator, or where the complaint is directly about the Head of School.

To escalate the complaint, the complainant will be asked to contact the Executive Headteacher either in person, in writing using the school's complaint form, by email, or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant if they have appropriate consent to do so. This consent to act on behalf of another must be evidenced by the Executive Headteacher before any progress is made towards a resolution.

The complainant should set out clearly the nature of their complaint, any unresolved issues, including relevant dates and full names of persons involved, clarify how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what action they feel would resolve the issue. Any documentation should be attached to the complaint.

The complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 school days of date of receipt.

The Executive Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt in writing, by letter or email, within 5 working school days.

Where the concern is about the Head of School the Executive Headteacher will carry out an investigation. During this investigation they may wish to speak further with the complainant to clarify / ascertain further details.

A full written response confirming the outcome of the investigation will be made to the complainant within 15 school days {excluding those that fall in the school holiday) of the written complaint being received.

The letter will set out the individual matters raised by the complainant, the findings made by the Executive Headteacher and the conclusion reached.

The letter will inform the complainant if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, and they wish to escalate to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the Governance Professional within 10 school days of the date of the formal written response they received.

Where the concern is about a complainant not being satisfied with the outcome of a Stage 1 – Review by Head of School / Investigator the Executive Headteacher, will invite the complainant in for a meeting to discuss the nature of their complaint and any unresolved issues, clarify how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently and clarify what action they feel would resolve the issue. If necessary the Executive Headteacher may ask them to clarify this in writing after the meeting, to ensure the details are correct.

The Executive Headteacher will then investigate the unresolved issues expressed in the meeting and /or in writing.

A full written response confirming the outcome of the investigation will be made to the complainant within 15 school days {excluding those that fall in the school holiday) of the written complaint being received, or the date of the meeting.

The letter will set out the individual matters raised by the complainant, the findings made by the Executive Headteacher and the conclusion reached.

The letter will inform the complainant if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, and they wish to escalate to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the Governance Professional within 10 school days of the date of the formal written response they received.

The federation knows how important face to face conversations on an informal basis are to facilitating mutually beneficial outcomes to complaints. As such they reserve the right to attempt to resolve any concern or complaint through conversation at any stage of the complaints procedure.

Stage 3 – Investigation by Chair of Governors / Governor / Independent Investigator

Complaints at this stage are in one of three categories:

1. **The complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 - Investigation by Executive Headteacher**
2. The complainant has **made a complaint about the Executive Headteacher, or a member of the Governing Board, this may include the Chair or Vice-Chair**
3. **The complaint is:**
    - **Jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair *or***
    - **the majority of the Governing Board *or***
    - **the entire Governing Board**

To escalate the complaint, the complainant will be asked to contact the Governance Professional either in person, in writing using the school's complaint form, by email, or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant if they have appropriate consent to do so. This consent to act on behalf of another must be evidenced by the Governance Professional before any progress is made towards a resolution.

The complainant should set out clearly the nature of their complaint, any unresolved issues, including relevant dates and full names of persons involved, clarify how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what action they feel would resolve the issue. Any documentation should be attached to the complaint.

The complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 school days of date of receipt.

The Governance Professional will record the date the complaint is received, confirm which element of Stage 3 this falls under (Stage 3a/3b or 3c) and will acknowledge receipt in writing, by letter or email, within 5 working school days.

Stage 3a – Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 2

The complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 - Investigation by Executive Headteacher.

When a complaint has been referred on from Stage 2 of the procedure (Where the concern is about a complainant not being satisfied with the outcome of a Stage 1 – Review by Head of School / Investigator), the Chair of Governors or a Suitably Skilled Governor will need to review the findings from Stage 2.

In reviewing the findings, they will need to establish if a further review by themselves will provide any further clarity or different outcome for the complainant. In so doing, they will need to inform the complainant of one of the following outcomes:

- They do not feel a further review will lead to any different outcome and that if the complainant is not satisfied with this they should refer to Stage 4 of the Complaints Procedure.
- They feel that the case is worth further investigation by themselves.

Where the Chair of Governors or Suitably Skilled Governor feel there is a requirement for further investigation they will, if deemed necessary and not made fully clear in the accompanying documents, invite the complainant in for a meeting to discuss the nature of their complaint and any unresolved issues, clarify how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently and clarify what action they feel would resolve the issue. If necessary the Chair of Governors, or Suitably Skilled Governor, may ask them to clarify this in writing after the meeting, to ensure the details are correct.

The Chair of Governors, or Suitably Skilled Governor, will then investigate the unresolved issues expressed in the meeting and /or in writing.

A full written response confirming the outcome of the investigation will be made to the complainant within 15 school days {excluding those that fall in the school holiday) of the written complaint being received, or the date of the meeting.

The letter will set out the individual matters raised by the complainant, the findings made by the Chair of Governors, or Suitably Skilled Governor, and the conclusion reached.

The letter will inform the complainant if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, and they wish to escalate to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the Governance Professional within 10 school days of the date of the formal written response they received.

Stage 3b - Complaints against the Executive Headteacher or a Governor

Any **concern or complaint made against the Executive Headteacher or a Governor** should be directed to the Governance Professional.

The Governance Professional may seek advice from Warwickshire Governor Services or the Diocese for support and advice.

If the **concern or complaint is about the Executive Headteacher or one member of the Governing Board (including the Chair or Vice-chair)**, a suitably skilled and impartial governor will carry out an investigation as outlined in the Informal (School Resolutions) Stage of the Complaints Procedure.

A full written response confirming the outcome of the investigation will be made to the complainant within 15 school days {excluding those that fall in the school holiday) of the written complaint being received.

The letter will set out the individual matters raised by the complainant, the findings made by the governor and the conclusion reached.

The letter will inform the complainant if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, and they wish to escalate to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the Governance Professional within 10 school days of the date of the formal written response they received.

Stage 3c - Concern or complaint is about the Chair and Vice-Chair, the entire Governing Board, or the majority of the Governing Board

If the **concern or complaint is about the Chair and Vice-Chair, the entire Governing Board, or the majority of the Governing Board** an independent investigator will carry out the steps as mentioned previously.

An Independent Investigator may be appointed by the Governing Board, the Local Authority, or the Diocese, a full written response confirming the outcome of the investigation will be made to the complainant within 15 school days {excluding those that fall in the school holiday) of the written complaint being received.

The letter will set out the individual matters raised by the complainant, the findings made by the Investigator and the conclusion reached.

The letter will inform the complainant if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, and they wish to escalate to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the Governance Professional within 10 school days of the date of the formal written response setting out the outcome of this Stage 3 investigation.

Where a time limit cannot be complied with, the school will write to the complainant within the specified time limit setting out the reasons confirm the new time limit which will apply.

If a **written complaint is sent directly to or received by any member of the Governing Board** it should be forwarded to school to enable the correct process to be followed.

Stage 4 – The Governing Board Review Committee Meeting

This is the **Final Stage of** the **Complaints Procedure**.

Throughout the Complaint Process the Governance Professional has a key role and during the Stage 4 process, they will be the main point of contact for all parties.

It is expected that Governors will fully support the Governance Professional by replying to all requests in a timely manner.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint under Stage 3 of the Complaints Policy and wishes to take the matter, further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 4 – a Governing Board Review Committee Meeting.

The complainant may write to the Governance Professional within 10 school days of receiving the letter confirming the outcome of Stage 3 and requesting a Governing Board Review Committee Meeting. Any requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The complainant should not repeat the matters raised in their original letter or attached documentation which has already been provided but should clearly set out how and why they do not accept the findings made under Stage 3 and state what their desired outcome is for consideration.

It is important to note that a complaint is not invalidated because the complainant has not used a Complaint Form.

The Governance Professional will fulfil the role of organising the time and date of the Governing Board Review Committee Meeting, inviting all the attendees, collating all the relevant documentation, and distributing in advance of the meeting.

The Governance Professional will record the date the complaint is received and write to the complainant within 5 school days of receipt to acknowledge receipt of their request for a Governing Board Review Committee Meeting.

The acknowledgement letter will confirm the date that the formal request to review the decision was received, the action to be taken and the specified time limit. It will also include the names of the Governing Board Review

Committee members. If this is not possible, the Governance Professional will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant believes there is likely to be bias in the proceedings, they reserve the right to request an independent Committee - complainants should provide evidence to support their request. Whilst the final decision regarding such a request rest with the Governing Board Review Committee it should be granted where the appearance of bias is enough to taint any decision reached.

The Governing Board Review Committee will consist of at least 3 Governing Board Members who were not directly involved in any matters detailed in the complaint, and with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint.

If the whole Governing Board is aware of the substance of a complaint before the Governing Board Review Committee Meeting has been completed, an independent Committee will be arranged to hear the complaint.

The Governance Professional will seek governors from other schools in the consortium, from the Local Authority, or the Diocese. The Governance Professional will ensure the governors are suitably skilled and can demonstrate that they are independent and impartial.

To appoint a governor from another school onto the Governing Board Review Committee, the Governing Board does not have to enter into, or already be in, a formal arrangement under the School Governance (Collaboration) (England) Regulations 2003.

Where a Governing Board Review Committee is arranged on an ad-hoc, informal basis, governors who are suitability skilled and who can demonstrate their independence will be sourced.

Governors from academies may be asked to serve on a Governing Board Review Committee.

The Governance Professional will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the Governing Board Review Committee meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 4 request. If this is not possible, the Governance Professional will write to the complainant and the school representative within the specified time limit setting out the reasons why the time limit cannot be complied with and confirm the new time limit which will apply

The Governing Board Review Committee members will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a Governing Board Review Committee Meeting or through written representation, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the Complainant's needs.

In some circumstances, it may be possible and appropriate for the Chair of the Governing Board Review Committee to resolve the issue with the Complainant without the need for a Governing Board Review Meeting.

If the Governing Board Review Committee cannot meet because the end of term is less than 20 working school days from the date the Acknowledgement Letter is sent, it must meet within 10 working school days of the start of the new term.

It is strongly recommended that where possible, Governing Board Review Committee Meetings are held before the end of the summer term.

If further investigations are necessary, new time limits may be set BUT the Governance Professional must write to the complainant and the school representative within the specified time limit setting out the reasons why the time limit cannot be complied with and confirm the new time limit which will apply

The Complainant must be given reasonable notice of the date of the Governing Board Review Committee Meeting; however, if they reject the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the Governance

Professional will decide when to hold the meeting. It may then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

If the complainant is invited to attend the Governing Board Review Committee Meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a friend, relative or colleague but they will not play any part in the proceedings unless invited to do so by the Chair. There may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate, such as 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.

If attendance of any pupils is required at the Governing Board Review Committee Meeting, parental permission will be sought if they are under the age of 18 years. A pupil has the right to be accompanied at a Governing Board Review Committee Meeting and extra care will be taken to consider the vulnerability of children where they are present.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

Once the Governing Board Review Committee Meeting has been arranged, the Governance Professional will write to the complainant to confirm 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. The Governance Professional will also request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the Committee Members.

A copy of the letter should be sent to the school representatives and the Governing Board Review Committee members.

Any written material that the Complainant and School representatives wish to submit in relation to their complaint must be sent to the Governance Professional at least 10 school days before the Governing Board Review Meeting.

The Governing Board Review Committee Members reserve the right not to consider any written material presented by either the complainant or the school less than 10 working school days prior to the Governing Board Review Meeting or at the meeting itself.

The 10 school days will allow the Governance Professional time to collate the material as a document pack for all parties.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The Governing Board Review Committee Members will not normally accept, as evidence, any recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties concerned.

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

The Governance Professional should co-ordinate any written material and ensure all parties receive the same information and will:

- ensure the Meeting Agenda is completed accurately to include the date, time, and venue of the meeting together with attendee information
- collate the written material as a 'Document Pack' which together with the Governing Board Review Committee Meeting Agenda will be sent to all parties (complainant, school representatives and committee members)
- circulate the Document Pack with the Meeting Agenda to all attendees. Consideration must be given to how the Document Pack is distributed and whether it should be emailed, sent by post, or in some cases delivered by hand

- circulate if appropriate the suggested room layout document and the fact-finding document to the Committee Members

Care should be taken that any confidential information is redacted from any written material sent to the Complainant, so as not to breach Data Protection Regulations / Safeguarding issues.

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 the notes.

If the Complainant(s) or School representatives wish to call witnesses, the names of these potential witnesses must be given to the Governance Professional at least 10 school days before the meeting. The Governing Board Review Committee Members will consider the appropriateness of any witnesses requested.

The Governing Board Review Committee Members are under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and /or may take written material into account.

If any new written material is presented at the meeting, the Chair of the Governing Board Review Committee will decide whether to accept the new material and **either** adjourn **or** postpone the meeting to enable all parties to review the material. Alternatively, the Chair of the Governing Board Review Committee will make the decision not to allow any new written material to be presented.

The Complainant(s) and School representatives are responsible for ensuring that any witnesses are aware of the time / date / location of the meeting.

The Complainant can be accompanied by a suitable companion, this may be a friend, relative, advocate or interpreter. The name of any companion attending must be advised to the Governance Professional 10 school days before the meeting.

We cannot restrict who can attend with the complainant as some complainants will need representation to help them to express themselves.

The Governing Board Review Committee Meeting is not a form of legal proceedings. 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.

The Governance Professional should let the school reception staff know who to expect on the day of the Governing Board Review Committee Meeting so that they can be signed in appropriately.

The Governance Professional will remain with the Committee members throughout the Governing Board Review Committee Meeting. They will take notes which are designed to serve as an aide memoir for the Governing Board Review Committee Members.

The Governing Board Review Committee Members must remember that any minutes / notes taken by the Governance Professional are releasable under a FOI (Freedom of Information) or SAR (Subject Access Request).

The Governing Board Review Committee Members will communicate their findings to all parties concerned within 10 school days of their meeting.

A letter outlining the decision reached will be sent to all parties.

Stage 4: The Governing Board Review Committee Meeting Process

The Chair of the Governing Board Review Committee will ensure that the Governance Professional takes notes during the meeting. The notes will summarise the procedure followed and the discussions taking place during the meeting but will not include the deliberations of the Governing Board Review Committee Members.

The notes are the property of the Governing Board Review Committee, and the final approved version can be made available upon request. Any notes taken would be releasable under a Freedom of Information or Subject Access Request.

The Chair of the Governing Board Review Committee will keep the proceedings as informal as possible as Complainants may not be comfortable in formal meetings and may feel inhibited in addressing the panel. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child.

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 notes taken.

The Governing Board Review Committee Members will consider all stages of the complaint. This is to make sure that decisions are not taken in isolation and there is a mechanism by which decisions are considered independently. If a new issue arises the Governing Board Review Committee members will use their discretion to decide if it is appropriate to consider and comment upon; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting.

However, the Governing Board Review Committee Members may decide it is not appropriate to review any new item at this stage or for any evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. In these circumstances, any new complaints must be dealt with from the Informal Stage of the procedure.

Members of the Governing Board Review Committee will be open-minded and independent. The aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school representative and the Complainant. However, it must be recognised that the Complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the Complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

The Governing Board Review Committee meeting will be held in private. Any witnesses (other than the Complainant and the Executive Headteacher) should only attend for the part of the meeting in which they give their evidence.

The meeting will allow for:

- each individual to have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence within a reasonable specified time limit without undue interruption so that the issues are addressed, and key findings of fact established
- witnesses to be called as appropriate to present their evidence
- the Governing Board Review Committee Members, the Complainant, and the school representative to be given the chance to ask and reply to questions
- the Complainant and the Executive Headteacher / School representative to summarise their position

The Chair of the Committee will explain to the Complainant and School representatives that once they have completed presenting their cases, they will be asked to leave the meeting while the Committee Members consider the evidence presented.

The Committee Members will reach a decision and respond in writing to all parties as soon as possible, but no longer than 10 working school days.

The Governance Professional will escort the Complainant, School representatives and witnesses from the meeting room.

The Governance Professional will return to the meeting room and remain present to record the decisions the Governing Board Review Committee Members make. They do not record the discussion that takes place.

The Governing Board Review Committee members will then put together their findings and recommendations in a letter to the Complainant.

The decision of the Governing Board Review Committee is final and will be communicated in writing to the complainant and school representatives within 10 school days. The recommendations and findings will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Executive Headteacher.

If it is not possible to meet this timeline, then the Chair of the Governing Board Review Committee will contact both parties to discuss a mutually convenient date.

The Governing Board Review Committee members will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. They can make the following decisions:

- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The members of the Governing Board Review Committee will work with the Governance Professional to draft a letter to the Complainant and School representative which details the decisions, recommendations, and the basis on which these have been made.

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Governing Board Review Committee to ensure the decision of the Committee is final and will be communicated in writing to the complainant and the school representative within 10 school days.

The letter to the Complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education (DfE) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled.

The Governance Professional will record the proceedings in the form of minutes. The typed minutes are a summary of the procedure followed and the discussions taking place at the meeting but will not include the deliberations of the panel. Notwithstanding this, full and comprehensive notes of the decision taken by the Governing Board Review Committee should be taken. The minutes are the property of the Governing Board Review Committee, and the final approved version can be made available upon request, with release subject to Data Protection rules.

The Governing Board Review Committee will ensure that their findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant.

Where relevant, the person complained about will receive an approved summary of the panel's findings and recommendations. They will also receive a copy of the minutes, subject to any necessary redactions under Data Protection legislation.

The Governing Board Review Committee will also ensure the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Executive Headteacher.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and the stage they were resolved or whether they proceeded to a Governing Board Review Committee Meeting, together with the actions been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence, documents and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Next Steps: Referring Complaints to the DfE

There is no further right of appeal in respect of the decision of the Governing Board Review Committee with regard to the complaint other than to the Department for Education (DfE) on the grounds that that the Governing Board Review Committee has not followed the complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure, or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints, or overturn any decisions made by the school or Governing Board Review Committee. They will consider whether the school or Governing Board Review Committee has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

If the complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the school will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

For further information regarding complaining about a school, see the following webpage:
https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school