



Innovate
Multi Academy Trust

Complaints Procedure

Approved by: iMAT Board of Directors

Date: Oct 2023

Next review due by: Oct 2024

Aims

We believe that our trust provides a good education for all our children, and that school leaders and all staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents and carers. However, the trust also has procedures in place to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Make sure any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school and trust improvement evaluation processes
- In all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The trust will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on our website, and on the websites of our schools.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils in our trust.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on [creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations](#), and refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework](#) with regards to dealing with complaints about the trust's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements.

Definitions and scope

Definitions

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”
- A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”
- **School leader** refers to the Headteacher or Head of School, as appropriate

Scope

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline
- Withdrawal from the curriculum (parents and carers can withdraw their child from any aspect of religious education, including the daily act of collective worship. They do not have to explain why)

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaints.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use trust premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

Roles and responsibilities

The complainant

- The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:
- Follow these procedures
- Cooperate with the school or trust throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Not publish details about the complaint on social media

The investigator

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint, and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the school leader or complaints committee, which includes the facts and potential solutions

The complaints co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- The school leader
- The designated complaints governor
- Any other staff member providing administrative support

The complaints co-ordinator will:

- Keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure
- Make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with staff members, the school leader, chair of governors, clerk, and chief executive officer (CEO) and chair of directors where applicable.
- Be aware of issues relating to:
 - Sharing third party information
 - Additional support needed by complainants, for example interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- Keep records

The clerk to the local governing body (LGB) and trust board

The clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings
- Arrange the complaints hearing
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

The committee chair

The committee chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout
- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case

Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

Timescales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the trust's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. Schools will keep a record of the complaint and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that a school is not meeting EYFS requirements by:

- Calling 0300 123 4666
- Emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- Using the online contact form available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>

Schools will notify parents and carers if they become aware that they are to be inspected by Ofsted. Schools will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

Stages of complaint

We have adopted a three-stage process for dealing with complaints:

Stage 1 – Complaint heard by a member of staff

Stage 2 – Complaint heard by the school leader

Stage 3 – Complaint heard by the complaints committee

Stage 1 – Informal resolution

Most concerns will be dealt with informally and parents/carers are encouraged to speak to a member of staff to discuss your concerns. Concerns can be raised either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact their school office for further details. The formal procedures set out below will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

If a parent/carer is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing within our trust, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and are making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress.

Our schools operate an open door policy and as such, parents/carers may wish to book in some time to talk to the school leader if this would be beneficial in resolving your concern informally.

Should the complaint be about the school leader, the CEO will do all they can to resolve the issue informally through a dialogue with those concerned.

Stage 2 – Formal resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (as set out in the above paragraphs), then parents/carers should put their complaint in writing using Appendix 1 attached.

Complaints not involving the school leader or a member of the LGB should be directed to the school leader. This can be done by:

- Email
- Letter addressed to the school leader, delivered to the school office

Complaints involving the school leader or a member of the LGB should be directed to the chair of the LGB. This can be done by:

- Email to the school office, marked FAO of the chair of the LGB
- Letter addressed to the chair of the LGB, delivered to the school office

Complaints involving the chair of the LGB should be directed to the trust governance professional. This can be done by:

- Email: heather.fishwick@innovatemat.org
- Letter addressed to the trust governance professional, delivered to the school office

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office.

The trust considers any formal complaints very seriously. The headteacher or the chair of the LGB will conduct the investigation.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire LGB or
- The majority of the LGB

The CEO or trust board will conduct the investigation.

The school leader will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take and in most cases, they will meet or speak with the parents/carers concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 10 school days. If the investigator 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 to be taken to resolve the complaint.

The school will hold a written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and the school's decision. The record will be retained for 1 year after the pupil leaves the school.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should inform the trust governance professional in writing within 10 school days.

Stage 3 – Review panel

Complaints will be escalated to the panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second, formal stage. The review panel will follow the procedures set out in Appendix 2.

When an appeal is received by the school, the school will, within 5 school days, refer the matter to the trust governance professional who will act as clerk for the review panel, or arrange for an appropriate alternative. Where the appeal is received by the school during academy holidays, or within 2 working days of their commencement, the school has 5 school days upon commencement of the school term to refer the matter to the clerk.

The panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the trust and must consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school. The panel cannot be made up solely of LGB members, as they are not independent of the management and running of the school.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire LGB or
- The majority of the LGB

The panel will be made up of trustees and an independent panel member.

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel. The clerk will aim to find a date within 20 school days of the request, where possible.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will set a date. The hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting.

After due consideration of the facts considered relevant, the panel will reach a decision, and make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 school days of the hearing. The decision reached by the review panel is final. Any decision reached that may have financial implications for the academy will need the appropriate approval from the trust, although any such approval must be compatible with the decision of the review panel. There is no further right of appeal to the LGB or trust. All complainants have the right, as a last resort, to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are not satisfied with the way in which their complaint has been considered. You can contact the ESFA via their complaints form on the following link: [complaint form](#)

Complaints about the trust, CEO or directors

Stage 1: informal

We make every effort to address any concerns or complaints early through informal measures.

The complainant should raise any concerns as soon as possible with the relevant member of the trust's central team, or the CEO.

If the concern regards the CEO, the complainant should contact the chair of the directors.

If the complainant is unsure who to contact, or needs to contact the chair of the directors, they should contact the trust office via heather.fishwick@innovatemat.org

The process for responding to and investigating an informal complaint about the trust or central staff is the same as that set out above.

Stage 2: formal

If the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily at the informal stage, the complainant must submit a formal complaint in writing.

The investigating officer will conduct an investigation, in line with the process set out above, providing a written response to the complainant within 10 school days.

Stage 3: panel hearing

Complaints will be escalated to the panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second, formal stage. The review panel will follow the procedures set out above, and in Appendix 2.

The panel will be appointed by the trust, and will consist of 3 members of the board not involved in investigating the complaint in the formal stage.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire trust board or
- The majority of the trust board

The panel will be entirely made up of independent members.

Referring complaints on completion of the school and trust procedures

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school or trust complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the ESFA. The ESFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly. The ESFA will not overturn the school or trust's decision about a complaint but will intervene if a school or trust has:

- Breached a clause in its funding agreement
- Failed to act in line with its duties under education law
- Acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising its functions

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

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

Persistent complaints

Unreasonably persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following this complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure, beyond all reason
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to cooperate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the timeframes it sets out

Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time

Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

Steps the school/trust will take

The school/trust will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of the school's/trust's position and their options. The school/trust will maintain the role of an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when meetings are held with individuals. The school/trust will follow this complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school/trust in a disruptive way, communication strategies may be put in place. The school/trust may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

Stopping responding

The school/trust may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- The school/trust has taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- The complainant has received a clear statement of the school's/trust's position and their options
- The complainant contacts the school/trust repeatedly, and the school/trust believes their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

The school/trust will inform the individual that they intend to stop responding and explain that any new complaints will still be considered.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the school/trust will immediately inform the police and communicate these actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school/trust site.

Duplicate complaints

If the school/trust has resolved a complaint under this procedure and received a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, the school/trust will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information that needs to be taken into account.

If the school/trust is satisfied that there are no new aspects, it will:

- Tell the new complainant that the issue has already been investigated and responded to, and that the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, this procedure will be repeated.

Complaint campaigns

Where the school/trust receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school/trust may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school/trust website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's/trust's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

Record-keeping and confidentiality

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about:

- Actions taken at all stages
- The stage at which the complaint was resolved
- The final outcome

The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes related to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and stored securely in the school office, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

In the case of complaints about the trust or central staff, these records will be managed by the trust governance professional, and will be stored securely in the trust's offices under restricted access.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and record retention schedule.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole LGB of the school (or the entire trust board) in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the LGB is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the LGB, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

Learning lessons

The LGB will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the school leader, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

The trust board will receive regular reports on the types of complaints received in each school in order to support the development of appropriate support structures, and to inform any improvements to procedures or practice.



Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the email address of the school 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:
Daytime telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint:
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

Complaint Panel Procedure: Complaint Stage Three

Initial Procedure

If parents/carers seek to invoke stage 3, following failure to reach an earlier resolution with the school leader or CEO's decision, they may request their complaint be considered by a review panel. Such a request must be made in writing addressed to the trust governance professional, care of the school.

Parents/carers must lodge their appeal in writing within 10 school days of the date of the school's decision made in accordance with the stage 2 procedure. The parents/carers should provide, in writing, a list of the complaints made against the school and which they believe to have been resolved unsatisfactorily by the stage 2 procedure, along with the remedies sought in respect of each.

Where an appeal is received by the school, the school will, within 5 school days, refer the matter to the trust governance professional who will act as clerk for the review panel. Where the appeal is received by the school during school holidays, or within 2 working days of their commencement, the school has 5 school days upon commencement of the school term to refer the matter to the clerk.

On receipt of an appeal, the clerk will then endeavour to convene an independent review panel hearing as soon as possible, usually no later than 20 school days after receipt of the notification from the parents/carers that they wish to invoke stage 3. The panel date will be dependent upon the availability of the panel members.

Who can attend

The panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the trust and must consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school. The panel cannot be made up solely of LGB members, as they are not independent of the management and running of the school.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire LGB or
- The majority of the LGB

The panel will be made up of trustees and an independent panel member.

The following are entitled to attend a hearing and/or, submit written representations and address the panel:

- The parent(s)/carer(s);
- The school leader
- Any other interested person whom the review panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the panel in their decision-making.

The complainant may bring someone along to provide support, this can be a relative or friend. Neither party is recommended to bring legal representatives to the panel 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. This decision will be made at the discretion of the panel chair.

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.

Before the Meeting

At least 5 school days before the meeting, the clerk will:

- Confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- Confirm and notify the school representative of the date, time and venue of the meeting ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;

Where required, the review panel may request any reports, documents, chronology or other useful information in advance of the hearing. Evidence will be sent to and collated by the clerk who will distribute the information to the relevant parties in advance of the hearing, in the form of an evidence pack. The usual timescale for the distribution of information is **five school days prior to the meeting**, to allow the panel time to review all necessary information. Information submitted after this date will only be considered at the discretion of the panel chair. If this is agreed to, it may be necessary to have a short adjournment at the beginning of the meeting, to give all parties time to consider this new information.

The committee will 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 panel and clerk may meet prior to the meeting, to ensure the process and purpose of the meeting is understood by all panel members. Neither the complainant nor the school representatives are permitted to attend this pre-meeting.

During the Meeting

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless this is part of a reasonable adjustment made to accommodate the complainant's needs. 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.

Review panels will be conducted in the following running order:

1. Opening from the panel chair, in which they will ensure all present have received necessary information in advance and understand the purpose of the meeting;
2. The complainant will make his/her case. The panel can then ask questions about the complaint;
3. The school will do the same, and will also be questioned by the panel;
4. There will be an opportunity for cross-questioning if necessary;
5. The chair should check that all parties feel they have been heard, and have had adequate opportunity to put forward their case;
6. Both parties will then be asked to withdraw while the panel deliberates in private. Neither party should have the opportunity to speak to the panel alone. If an adjournment is needed by either party, both parties should retire to separate waiting rooms until the panel resumes.

7. After consideration of the case, the panel may re-open the meeting and call back both parties to inform them of whether they have decided to reject or uphold the complaint. Alternatively, the panel can choose to let those concerned know of their decision at a later date

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.

After the Meeting

After due consideration of the facts considered relevant, the panel will reach a decision, and make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 school days of the hearing. The outcome will be communicated to the complainant via letter, sent from the panel chair on behalf of the panel.

The decision reached by the review panel is final. Any decision reached that may have financial implications for the school will need the appropriate approval from the trust, although any such approval must be compatible with the decision of the review panel. There is no further right of appeal to the LGB or trust. All complainants have the right, as a last resort, to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are not satisfied with the way in which their complaint has been considered. You can contact the ESFA via their complaints form on the following link [Complaint Form](#)

Roles and Responsibilities

The complainant

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

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible;
- cooperate 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.

The clerk

The clerk provides an independent source of advice on procedure for all parties. The clerk should not have been involved in prior stages of the complaint, or be closely connected with it in another other way. Where this is the case, an alternative clerk should be appointed from within the trust.

The clerk will:

- 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 and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale;
- record the proceedings;

- circulate the minutes of the meeting;

The panel chair

The chair to the review panel, who is nominated in advance of the panel, should ensure:

- both parties are asked (via the clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, 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.
- 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.

The panel members

Members of the panel 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 academy 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 at the centre of the complaint, 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.

Recording the Complaint

The school must record:

- The progress of the complaint and the final outcome
- Whether the case progressed to a panel hearing
- The action taken by the school or the trust, regardless of outcome

This record must be kept secure and must be available for inspection on the school premises by the school leader.

- For major complaints, records should be kept for 6 years after the complaint is resolved.
- For complaints related to negligence, records should be kept for 15 years after the complaint is resolved.
- For complaints related to child protection or safeguarding issues, records should be kept for 40 years after the complaint is resolved.