

Complaints Policy

Forest Skies Federation



Approved by:

COG

Date: September 2026

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Signed	Mr T Culpin, Chair of Governors Mr M Davies, Headteacher, Birchwood Junior School Miss N Haughton, Headteacher Miss J Bingwa, Headteacher
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What has changed in this version

- Chair of Governors updated to Mr Tim Culpin.
- New section on data protection complaints, reflecting section 103 of the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, which requires organisations to facilitate complaints, acknowledge them within 30 days and respond without undue delay.
- New section on unreasonable, repeated and duplicate complaints, and on complaint campaigns.
- New sections on mediation, record keeping and retention, and annual monitoring by the Governing Body.
- Feedback is now distinguished from a concern and a complaint, in line with the January 2026 DfE, Ofsted and Parentkind guidance for parents and schools.
- Stage 2 committee membership corrected: members are selected for impartiality, not by availability.
- New provision setting out that the Vice-Chair of Governors acts in the Chair's place where the Chair is unavailable or conflicted.

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1. Our approach to concerns and complaints

The Forest Skies Federation wants every child to do well and every family to feel able to speak to us when something is not right. Most issues are resolved quickly by talking to the right person, and that is almost always the fastest route to a solution for the child concerned.

This procedure exists so that when something cannot be resolved that way, there is a clear, fair and published route to follow. We will not treat a complaint as a mark against a family, and raising a complaint will never affect how a child is treated at school.

In this procedure, "the Headteacher" means the headteacher of the school within the Federation to which the complaint relates. Each school in the Federation has its own headteacher, and the Governing Body of the Forest Skies Federation is the governing body for all of them.

This procedure is published on the Federation website and is available in paper form from any school office on request. It is provided in alternative formats on request.

We will make reasonable adjustments so that anyone can use this procedure. That includes providing information in alternative formats, providing help to put a complaint in writing, holding meetings in accessible locations, and arranging interpretation or advocacy support. Please tell the school office what you need.

2. Who can make a complaint

This procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children registered at one of our schools. Any person, including a member of the public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that the Federation provides.

A complaint may be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, provided they have the complainant's consent to do so. We will ask to see that consent in writing.

Where a complaint is made by a child or young person, we will ask in advance what support they need to put their complaint forward, and we will make sure they are not placed in a formal setting without that support.

3. Feedback, a concern, or a complaint

It helps everyone if we are clear about what is being raised. There are three different things, and they take different routes.

What it is	What it means and what happens next
Feedback	A comment, suggestion or observation. You are not asking us to put anything right, but you want us to know. Route: tell any member of staff, or use the contact form on the school website. We log it and use it when we review our practice. You will not normally receive an individual response.

A concern	An expression of worry or doubt about something important to you, for which you are seeking reassurance. Route: raise it with the class teacher in the first instance, or with the Headteacher. Most concerns are resolved at this point without any need for a formal process.
A complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about action taken or a lack of action. Route: the formal procedure at Stages 1 and 2 of this document.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be settled informally without using the formal stages. We would encourage you to try that route first. You are not required to, however, and if you want to make a formal complaint straight away you may do so.

If you find it difficult to raise a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect that and the Headteacher will refer you to another member of staff. The same applies if the member of staff involved feels unable to deal with the concern. The person we refer you to may or may not be more senior; the ability to consider the matter objectively and impartially matters more than seniority.

Guidance for parents and carers

The Department for Education, Ofsted and Parentkind published a joint guide for parents in January 2026, Parent guide to school complaints, alongside a companion guide for schools. We have written this procedure to sit alongside it and we would encourage you to read it. A copy is linked from the policies page of our website.

4. What you can expect from us, and what we ask of you

What you can expect from us

- We will take your complaint seriously and look at it properly.
- We will tell you who is dealing with it and by when you will hear from us.
- We will keep to the timescales in this procedure, and if we cannot, we will tell you why and give you a new date.
- We will explain our decision and the reasons for it in writing.
- We will tell you how to take the matter further if you are not satisfied.
- We will treat you, and everyone involved, with courtesy and respect.

What we ask of you

- Explain the complaint in full, and as early as you can.
- Tell us what outcome you are looking for.
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings.

- Treat everyone involved with respect. Our staff, governors and volunteers are entitled to work without being shouted at, threatened, sworn at or abused, in person, in writing, by telephone or online.
- Do not publicise the details of your complaint on social media while it is being considered, and respect the confidentiality of everyone involved, including children and staff who are not party to your complaint.
- Ask for help if you need it. The school office will help you complete the complaint form, and organisations such as Citizens Advice can also help.

A note on artificial intelligence

You are free to use any tool you wish to help you write to us, and using one will not count against your complaint. We do ask that you check anything an AI tool produces before sending it. In our experience these tools frequently cite legislation, guidance and case law that does not apply, or does not exist, which lengthens the process and makes it harder for us to identify what you actually want put right. A short account in your own words is almost always dealt with faster.

Where behaviour towards staff falls below the standard set out above, we may act under the Parent and Carer Code of Conduct or under section 16 of this procedure. That is separate from, and does not affect, the consideration of the complaint itself.

5. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint may be made in person, in writing, or by telephone. A template complaint form is at Appendix A. You do not have to use the form, but it helps us make sure we have understood what you are complaining about and what you want done.

Please do not approach individual governors to raise a concern or complaint. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis, and doing so may prevent them from sitting on a complaints committee at Stage 2, which reduces the pool of impartial governors available to hear your complaint.

Send your complaint to the right person from the outset:

If your complaint is about...	Address it to...
A member of school staff, other than the Headteacher	The Headteacher of the school concerned, via the school office. Please mark it Private and Confidential.
The Headteacher of a school in the Federation	Mr Tim Culpin, Chair of Governors, via the school office. If the Chair is unavailable, or has had prior involvement in the matter, the Vice-Chair of Governors will act in the Chair's place. Please mark it Private and Confidential.
The Chair of Governors, an individual governor, or the Governing Body as a whole	The Clerk to the Governing Body, via the school office. Please mark it Private and Confidential.

School office contact details for each school in the Federation are on the Federation website. Correspondence marked Private and Confidential and addressed to the Chair of Governors or the Clerk will not be opened by the school office.

6. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints, because we cannot clarify what is being alleged or report the outcome. The Headteacher, or the Chair of Governors or Vice-Chair where appropriate, will decide whether an anonymous complaint nevertheless warrants investigation.

This does not apply to safeguarding. Any anonymous information that raises a concern about the welfare of a child will always be acted on under our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

7. Time limits

You must raise a complaint within three months of the incident, or, where a series of associated incidents has occurred, within three months of the last of them. We will consider complaints made outside this period where exceptional circumstances apply.

8. Complaints received outside term time

A complaint received outside term time will be treated as having been received on the first school day after the holiday period. All references in this procedure to "school days" mean days on which the school concerned is open to pupils.

9. Scope of this procedure, and matters dealt with elsewhere

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by the Forest Skies Federation, other than those dealt with under separate statutory procedures. The matters below are dealt with elsewhere.

Matter	Where it is dealt with
School admissions	Lincolnshire County Council admissions team. www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/local-democracy/your-comments-and-feedback/complaints/
Statutory assessment of special educational needs, and the content of an EHC plan	Lincolnshire County Council, and thereafter the First-tier Tribunal (SEND). Independent information and support is available from the Lincolnshire SEND Information, Advice and Support Service. Complaints about how this school delivers the provision set out in an EHC plan, or about our SEND practice generally, are dealt with under this procedure.
School re-organisation proposals	Lincolnshire County Council.
Matters likely to require a child protection investigation	Our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, and relevant statutory guidance. If you have a serious concern about an adult who works with children, you may contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): LSCB_LADO@lincolnshire.gov.uk — [confirm current LADO names and direct numbers] Online referral form: lincolnshirecountyself.achieveservice.com/service/LADO_Referral_Form Children's Services: 01522 782111 (office hours), 01522 782333 (out of hours emergency duty team).
Suspension or permanent exclusion of a pupil	The statutory exclusions process. www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions A complaint about how the behaviour policy has been applied, as distinct from the exclusion decision itself, can be made under this procedure.
Whistleblowing	Our internal whistleblowing procedure, which covers all employees including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for whistleblowers in education who do not wish to raise a matter directly with their employer: www.education.gov.uk/contactus Volunteers who have concerns should complain through this procedure.
Staff grievances	The Federation's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	The Federation's internal disciplinary procedures, where appropriate. Complainants will not be told what disciplinary action, if any, has been taken against a member of staff. You will be told that the matter is being addressed.
The content of the National Curriculum	The Department for Education: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

	Complaints about how we deliver the curriculum, including RE and RSHE, are dealt with under this procedure. Complaints about the content of the agreed syllabus for RE, or about collective worship, may also be raised with the Lincolnshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).
Services provided on our premises by another organisation	That organisation's own complaints procedure. Please contact them directly. We will provide their contact details on request.
Requests for information, and complaints about how we have handled your personal data	See section 10 below.

If another body is investigating an aspect of your complaint — for example the police, a local authority safeguarding team, or a tribunal — this may affect our ability to keep to the timescales in this procedure, or may result in the procedure being suspended until that investigation has concluded. We will tell you if that happens and why.

If you begin legal action against the Federation in relation to your complaint, we will consider whether to suspend this procedure until those proceedings have concluded.

10. Data protection complaints

If you are unhappy about how we have handled your personal information, or the personal information of your child, you may make a data protection complaint. This includes complaints about a subject access request, about the accuracy of information we hold, about information having been shared inappropriately, or about a data breach.

Section 103 of the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 requires us to provide a route for making such complaints, to acknowledge them within 30 days, to take appropriate steps to investigate, and to tell you the outcome without undue delay.

You may make a data protection complaint by contacting the school office and marking your correspondence for the attention of the Data Protection Officer, or by using the data protection complaint form on the Federation website. We will acknowledge it within 30 calendar days.

Data protection complaints are handled by the Data Protection Officer rather than through Stages 1 and 2 of this procedure. If your complaint contains both a data protection element and other matters, we will deal with the data protection element through this route and the remainder through Stages 1 and 2, and we will tell you clearly which part is being handled where.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you may complain to the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.org.uk or on 0303 123 1113. The Information Commissioner may ask whether you have complained to us first.

Data Protection Officer

Name: [insert DPO name]

Contact: [insert DPO email address and telephone number]

11. Resolving complaints, including mediation

At every stage of this procedure our aim is to resolve the complaint. Where appropriate we will acknowledge that a complaint is upheld in whole or in part. We may also 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 that the matter complained of does not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure it does not happen again, and the timescale within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review a policy in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Mediation

At any point, and with the agreement of both parties, we may offer mediation by an independent third party. Mediation is voluntary. It is not a stage of this procedure and it does not replace any stage. Taking part in mediation does not prevent you from continuing with your complaint, and declining mediation will not count against you.

Where both parties agree to mediation, the timescales in this procedure will be paused for the duration and we will confirm the revised dates to you in writing.

12. Withdrawing a complaint

If you wish to withdraw your complaint, we will ask you to confirm this in writing. We may still act on any matter of concern that has come to light, and we will always act on any safeguarding matter, whether or not the complaint is withdrawn.

13. Stage 1 — formal complaint to the Headteacher

A formal complaint must be made to the Headteacher of the school concerned, via the school office, unless it is about a Headteacher or a governor. It may be made in person, in writing (preferably on the form at Appendix A) or by telephone.

What happens, and when

When	What happens
Within 5 school days of receipt	The Headteacher records the date the complaint was received and acknowledges it in writing, by letter or email. In that acknowledgement the Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved, and ask what outcome you are looking for. The Headteacher may propose a meeting if that is the most effective way of doing this.
During the investigation	The Headteacher, or an investigator, will where necessary interview those involved and those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish, and will keep a written record of any meeting or interview.
Within 15 school days of receipt	The Headteacher provides a formal written response setting out what was done to investigate, the decision reached, the reasons for it, and any action the Federation will take. The response will also explain how to escalate to Stage 2.
If the deadline cannot be met	The Headteacher will contact you before the deadline passes with an explanation and a revised response date.

The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the senior leadership team. The decision may not be delegated.

Where the complaint is about a Headteacher or a governor

Complaints about a Headteacher, or about a member of the Governing Body, including the Chair or Vice-Chair, must be made to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. A suitably skilled governor with no prior involvement will be appointed to carry out all the Stage 1 actions set out above, to the same timescales.

Where the Chair of Governors is unavailable, or has had prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it, the Vice-Chair of Governors will act in the Chair's place for the purposes of this procedure. Where the complaint is about the Chair, the Vice-Chair will act. Where it is about the Vice-Chair, the Chair will act. In either case the Clerk will confirm in writing to the complainant who is dealing with the complaint and why.

Where the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair, about the entire Governing Body, or about a majority of the Governing Body, Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Governing Body, who will provide a formal written response.

14. Stage 2 — complaints committee of the Governing Body

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wish to take the matter further, you may escalate to Stage 2: consideration by a complaints committee of the Governing Body. This is the final stage of the Federation's procedure.

Requesting Stage 2

- A request to escalate must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.
- Requests received outside this period will be considered only where exceptional circumstances apply.
- The Clerk will record the date of receipt and acknowledge the request in writing within 5 school days.
- The Clerk will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If that is not possible, the Clerk will give an anticipated date and keep you informed.
- If you reject three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting and it will proceed in your absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

Who sits on the committee

The committee will consist of at least three governors who have had no prior involvement in the complaint and no knowledge of the circumstances surrounding it, and who have no external interest in the outcome. Governors are selected on that basis, not on the basis of who is available. They will decide among themselves who will chair the committee, in advance of the meeting.

If fewer than three eligible governors are available within the Federation, the Clerk will source additional independent governors through another local school or through the local authority's Governor Services team. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened.

Where the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair, about the entire Governing Body, or about a majority of the Governing Body, Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

Before the meeting

The committee will decide whether to consider the complaint at a meeting or on written representations. In making that decision it will be sensitive to your needs and will tell you the reason for its decision.

At least 10 school days before the meeting the Clerk will confirm the date, time and venue, ensure the venue and proceedings are accessible, and request any further written material. Further written material must be submitted at least 5 school days before the meeting. All written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days before the meeting.

At the meeting

- The meeting is held in private. Representatives of the media are not permitted to attend.
- If you are invited to attend, you may bring someone with you for support, such as a relative or a friend.

- We do not generally encourage either party to bring legal representatives. There may be occasions when it is appropriate — for example, a member of staff called as a witness may wish to be supported by a trade union or legal representative.
- The committee will not normally accept recordings of conversations obtained covertly and without the informed consent of everyone recorded.
- Electronic recording of the meeting is not normally permitted unless a complainant's disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties must be obtained and will be recorded in the minutes.
- The committee will not consider new complaints at this stage, or evidence unrelated to the original complaint. A new complaint must be dealt with from Stage 1.
- The meeting will be minuted.

The decision

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented, and may uphold the complaint in whole or in part, or dismiss it in whole or in part. Where a complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will decide what action should be taken to resolve it and, where appropriate, recommend changes to the Federation's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in future.

The Chair of the Committee will write to you and to the Federation within 5 school days of the meeting with a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. That letter will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if you believe your complaint has not been handled in accordance with this procedure.

Where the committee recommends changes to Federation systems or procedures, the Clerk will report those recommendations to the full Governing Body, and the Governing Body will record what action has been taken.

Complaints about the conduct of a member of staff will not generally be handled under this procedure. You will be advised that any staff conduct matter will be considered under the staff disciplinary procedures where appropriate, but the outcome will not be shared with you.

15. Next steps if you remain dissatisfied

Stage 2 is the final stage of the Federation's procedure. If you believe we did not handle your complaint in accordance with this published procedure, or that we acted unlawfully or unreasonably in exercising our duties under education law, you may contact the Department for Education once Stage 2 is complete.

The Department for Education will not normally re-investigate the substance of a complaint or overturn a decision made by the Federation. It will consider whether we have adhered to education legislation and to any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

Body	How to contact them and what they will do
Department for Education School Complaints Unit	Online: www.education.gov.uk/contactus Telephone: 0370 000 2288 By post: Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD Considers whether we followed our published procedure and education law.
Ofsted	Ofsted does not resolve individual disputes between a parent and a school and cannot reverse a decision we have made. It may record your complaint and take it into account at our next inspection. Ofsted may consider a qualifying complaint where the concern is about the school as a whole rather than an individual matter.
Information Commissioner's Office	For complaints about how we have handled personal data, once you have complained to us first. www.ico.org.uk , 0303 123 1113.
Lincolnshire County Council	For admissions, statutory SEND assessment and school re-organisation, as set out in section 9.

16. Unreasonable, repeated and duplicate complaints

The Federation is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service. We do not expect staff, governors or volunteers to tolerate behaviour that is abusive, offensive or threatening, and we may need to limit contact where the way a complaint is pursued is placing an unreasonable demand on the school.

This section is used rarely, and only where the way in which a complaint is being pursued is the problem. It is never used because a complaint is inconvenient, persistent in the ordinary sense, or critical of the Federation.

Repeated and duplicate complaints

Where a complaint has already been considered and concluded through Stages 1 and 2, and a further complaint is received about the same matter from the same complainant with no significant new evidence, the Chair of Governors may inform the complainant in writing that the matter is closed and that further correspondence on it will be acknowledged but not answered. The complainant will be told how to escalate to the Department for Education.

Where an identical complaint is received from a number of people, we will normally investigate it once and send the same response to everyone, or publish a single response on the Federation website. Where a large number of people submit the same complaint as part of a campaign, we may send one response to all, or one response to the organiser for circulation.

Unreasonable behaviour

Behaviour that may be treated as unreasonable includes:

- refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint despite reasonable offers of help
- refusing to co-operate with the complaints process while still expecting the complaint to be resolved
- refusing to accept that certain matters are not within the scope of this procedure
- insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure or with good practice
- making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issue, and seeking to have them replaced
- changing the substance of a complaint, or raising unrelated concerns, while the complaint is being addressed
- making an unreasonable number of contacts, by any means, such that they impede the handling of the complaint or the running of the school
- using threats, physical violence, or abusive, offensive or discriminatory language, in person, in writing, by telephone or online
- knowingly providing falsified information
- publishing unacceptable information about staff, governors or pupils on social media or elsewhere.

What we will do

Before restricting contact we will write to the complainant explaining what behaviour is causing the difficulty, what we are asking them to change, and what will happen if it does not change. Where behaviour continues, the Chair of Governors, or the Vice-Chair where the Chair is unavailable or conflicted, in consultation with the Headteacher of the school concerned, may impose restrictions. These will be proportionate and time-limited, will be confirmed in writing with the reasons, will be reviewed after a specified period, and will include a route of appeal to the Governing Body. Restrictions may include:

- requiring contact to be in writing only, or through a single named point of contact
- requiring contact to take place at set times or intervals
- requiring contact to be conducted in the presence of a witness
- acknowledging but not responding to further correspondence on a closed matter.

Where behaviour is threatening or violent, we will act immediately, may withdraw permission to be on the school site, and will report the matter to the police. We will always ensure that the complaint itself continues to be dealt with, and that arrangements remain in place for the complainant to communicate with us about their child's education and welfare.

17. Recording, confidentiality and retention

The Federation maintains a central complaints log, held by the Clerk to the Governing Body. It records the date a complaint was received, the stage it reached, the outcome, and any action taken as a result.

Records are held securely and access is restricted to those who need it.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them, or where disclosure is required under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Data Protection Act 2018.

Papers produced during an investigation are kept securely pending any escalation. Complaint records are retained for six years from the date of resolution and are then securely destroyed, in line with the Federation's retention schedule.

A complaint record will not be placed on a pupil's educational record.

18. Monitoring and review

The Clerk will report to the Governing Body annually on the number of complaints received, the stages they reached, the outcomes, and any themes arising. The report will not identify individual complainants, pupils or members of staff.

The Governing Body will use that report to identify where practice needs to improve, and will record what action has been taken in response to any recommendation made by a complaints committee.

This procedure will be reviewed annually, and sooner if statutory guidance changes. Responsibility for the review sits with the Governing Body.

19. Roles and responsibilities

Complainant

You will receive a more effective response if you:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the Federation in seeking a solution
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings, and to requests to agree the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of the complaint on social media, and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint
- interviewing the complainant sensitively and thoroughly to establish what has happened and who has been involved
- interviewing staff, children and other people relevant to the complaint
- considering records and other relevant information, and analysing it
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator 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 questioning
- keep notes of interviews, or arrange for an independent note taker
- ensure any papers produced are kept securely pending any escalation
- be mindful of the timescales for response
- prepare a comprehensive report for the Headteacher or complaints committee setting out the facts, identifying solutions and recommending courses of action.

The Headteacher or complaints committee then determines whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint, communicates that decision to the complainant, and provides the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints co-ordinator

This may be the Headteacher, a designated complaints governor, or another member of staff providing administrative support. The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure the complainant is fully updated at each stage
- liaise with staff, the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors, the Clerk and the local authority to ensure the smooth running of the procedure
- be aware of issues around sharing third-party information

- be aware of any additional support the complainant may need, including interpretation support, or support where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

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

- ensure everyone involved is aware of their legal rights and duties, including those under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR as amended by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring dates are convenient to all parties invited to attend and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate written material relevant to the complaint and send it to the parties within the agreed timescale
- record the proceedings and circulate the minutes
- notify all parties of the committee's decision
- maintain the central complaints log and report annually to the Governing Body.

Committee Chair

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

- both parties are asked, via the Clerk, to provide any additional information 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, which is particularly important where the complainant is a child or young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided this does not breach confidentiality or any individual's right to privacy under the Data Protection Act 2018 or the UK GDPR
- where a new issue arises, everyone has the opportunity to consider and comment on it, adjourning briefly if necessary
- both the complainant and the Federation are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either in writing ahead of the meeting or verbally at it
- the issues are addressed and 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 or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk and the complaints co-ordinator.

Committee member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and must be seen to be so. No governor may sit on the committee if they have had prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it
- the aim is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the Federation and the complainant. A complainant may not be satisfied if the meeting does not find in their favour; it may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations
- many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting, and parents and carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue affecting their child
- extra care is needed where the complainant is a child or young person, or where a child or young person is present for part of the meeting. The atmosphere and proceedings should ensure they do not feel intimidated
- the views of a child or young person should be respected and given equal consideration to those of adults
- where a child or young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance what support they need. Where the parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child needs to attend. Agreement may not always be possible where the committee considers attendance is not in the child's best interests
- the welfare of the child is paramount.

Appendix A — Complaint form

Please complete this form and return it to the school office, addressed to the Headteacher of the school concerned or, where the complaint concerns a Headteacher or a governor, to the Clerk to the Governing Body. We will acknowledge receipt within 5 school days and explain what will happen next.

You do not have to use this form. A letter or email containing the same information is equally acceptable. If you would like help completing it, please ask at the school office.

Your name	
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant)	
Pupil's name (if relevant)	
School	
Address	
Postcode	
Telephone number	
Email address	
How you would prefer us to contact you	

Please give details of your complaint, including what has happened, when, and whether you have already spoken to anyone at the school about it.

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

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

Do you need any adjustments or support to take part in this process? For example, information in another format, an interpreter, or an accessible meeting venue.

Signature	Date
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Official use only

Date received	
Date acknowledgement sent	
Sent by	
Complaint referred to	

Date referred	
Logged in complaints register	

Appendix B — Timescales at a glance

All references to days are school days, except where stated. A complaint received outside term time is treated as received on the first school day after the holiday.

Step	Timescale
Raising a complaint after the incident	Within 3 months (calendar)
Stage 1 — acknowledgement by the Headteacher	Within 5 school days of receipt
Stage 1 — written response	Within 15 school days of receipt
Requesting escalation to Stage 2	Within 10 school days of the Stage 1 response
Stage 2 — acknowledgement by the Clerk	Within 5 school days of the request
Stage 2 — meeting convened	Within 15 school days of the request
Notice of the meeting date, time and venue	At least 10 school days before
Deadline for further written material	At least 5 school days before the meeting
Circulation of written material to all parties	At least 3 school days before the meeting
Stage 2 — written decision	Within 5 school days of the meeting
Data protection complaint — acknowledgement	Within 30 calendar days (Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, s.103)
Retention of complaint records	6 years from resolution

Maximum published route

From receipt of a formal complaint to the final written decision at Stage 2, the published timescales total 45 school days, assuming each step uses its full allowance: 15 (Stage 1 response) + 10 (request to escalate) + 15 (meeting convened) + 5 (written decision). Approximately nine school weeks.