



Endeavour
Multi-Academy Trust



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

ENDEAVOUR MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Introduction and Purpose

This policy sets out Endeavour MAT's approach to handling complaints using:

- Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014
- Education and Skills Funding Agency's guidance/Department for Education, "Best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures" 12 March 2021
- [V8- Parent Complaint Guide](#)

The aim of this policy is to resolve concerns swiftly, fairly and transparently, with clear rights of review and escalation.

2. Scope and Application

Who can complain: any person may complain about any provision of facilities or services by the Trust or its schools. Complaints from parents and carers of registered pupils will be handled in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Complaints from other individuals may be considered using this procedure at the Trust's discretion.

- Complaints must normally be raised within three months of the incident (or last in a series). The Trust may consider complaints made outside of this frame only if exceptional circumstances apply.
- Complaints received outside term time are treated as received on the first school day of the next term.
- Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated; discretion lies with the CEO/Headteacher or Chair, as appropriate. However, the person responsible for determining the complaint at Stage Two may decide that the information provided warrants an investigation outside of this complaints policy.

This policy does not cover matters handled under other statutory procedures:

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the relevant local authority.
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.

	If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0300 111 8007.
Suspension/Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about suspension/exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. <i>*complaints about the application of the Behaviour policy can be made through this procedure.</i> A copy of the school's Behaviour Policy can be found on the school website.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about one of our schools should complain through this procedure.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the Trust's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the Trust's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against the Trust or any school within the Trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

We reserve the right to reject a vexatious complaint. Vexatious complaints may be characterised (but are not limited to) as complaints which are:

- are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- insistent upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
- insistent upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- designed to cause disruption or annoyance; and/or
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value.

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

3. Definitions and Principles

Concern: an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered important for which reassurances are sought.

Complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.

- We encourage early, informal resolution wherever possible.
- Equalities: reasonable adjustments will be made to support access to this procedure.

‘School days’ means a school day during term time and does not include INSET days, weekends, bank or public holidays or any other days that are outside term time. (For the avoidance of doubt and ease of operation, complaints about the Trust will also be subject to School days.)

Whilst this policy permits a complainant to be joined by a representative at any Stage Two or Stage Three meeting, legal representation is discouraged.

All parties must observe mutual dignity and respect throughout the complaints policy’s procedures. Complainants are encouraged to familiarise themselves with [V8- Parent Complaint Guide](#) which provides useful guidance and information.

For the avoidance of doubt, electronic recordings that have been obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded, will not be accepted, or considered as evidence.

4. Process for Complaints

Stage 1 - Raise the concern informally with the school

Parents/carers are encouraged to speak to the class teacher or relevant staff member first. The aim is early, informal resolution before anything becomes a formal complaint. If the complainant is not a parent or carer of a pupil, they should direct their complaint to the Headteacher or the CEO of the Trust as applicable. The complaint may be submitted in person, by telephone, or in writing.

Details of the circumstances which have given rise to the complaint may be required in addition to how the matter should be dealt with or how a resolution being achieved. It may be necessary to put these details in writing.

There may be some occasions where the complaint can be resolved on the spot. If that is achievable, details of the concern and the resolution will be recorded by the member of staff for monitoring purposes.

There may be some complaints which require further enquiries, with accounts being taken from other parties involved. The member of staff dealing with the complaint at Stage One will make a record of the issues raised, and will carry out those enquiries. The member of staff shall endeavour to conclude the enquiries **within 15 school days** from the date when the complaint was made, or sooner where possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

Once the enquiries have been concluded, the member of staff will contact the complainant and provide either verbally or in writing:

- a summary of their understanding of the complaint raised;
- a summary of the information which they have discovered as part of their Stage One enquiries (if required to be undertaken);
- provide a response to the complaint and an explanation as to how the response has been reached;
- confirm whether any action is to be taken; and,
- confirm that the matter will be logged and that a record will be retained to ensure that steps can be taken to avoid the issue arising again.

If the issue isn't resolved, the parent/carers could take it to a head of year, subject leader, or senior leader. This step reinforces problem-solving before involving the Headteacher.

Complainants should not approach individual governors/trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint (Headteacher/CEO)

If the complainant is not satisfied that the matter has been resolved at Stage 1, or the matter is a whole school issue, or there are serious concerns, the complainant can use the formal procedure by completing the Complaint Form (at Appendix A) and submitting it via the School Office (or Trust Office for Central Team matters) **within 10 school days** of the Stage 1 response. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the Trust/school office. You can also ask third party organisations like Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

The completed form is to be addressed to the Headteacher (or CEO for Central Team matters) marked “Private and Confidential”. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, address it to the Chair of Governors via the Governance Professional (contact details for the Governance Professional will be available from the School or Trust Office). If the complaint is about a Governor, address it to the Chair of Governors via the Governance Professional, or if it is about the Chair of Governors, address it to the Chair of Trustees via the Assistant to the Executive Board at the Trust Office. If the complaint relates to the Trust, the complaint form should be directed to the Trust’s CEO. In the event the complaint is about the CEO the form should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees. A complaint about the Chair of Trustees should be submitted to the Trust’s external auditors.

- Acknowledgment **within 5 school days** to provide the contact details of the person dealing with the complaint; clarification may be by meeting/phone/ email.
- Investigation may be delegated to a senior leader or external investigator (Investigating Officer), however the decision remains with Headteacher/CEO. The Investigating Officer must not have been involved with the complaint at the previous stages or in any other way.
- Written outcome **within 15 school days** of receipt where possible; if delayed, provide an update and revised date.
- Outcome letter will explain findings, actions and how to escalate to Stage Three if dissatisfied.

During the Stage Two investigation, the complainant is required to keep the details of the complaint private and confidential. This is to enable a just and fair investigation to be undertaken. Any steps taken by the complainant which do not preserve the confidentiality of the complaint may undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of the Stage Two

investigation and could require separate action to be taken to address any such breach of confidentiality.

The complainant may be invited to attend a meeting with the Investigating Officer (“Stage Two Meeting”). Please note this is not a compulsory part of Stage Two and entirely at the discretion of the Investigating Officer.

If deemed necessary to hold a Stage Two Meeting, it should be arranged at a time and location convenient for the complainant. Meetings may also take place by telephone or remote meeting platform.

The complainant will be entitled to be accompanied at the Stage Two meeting by one of the following: relative; friend or a representative.

At the conclusion of the Stage Two investigation a decision regarding the complaint will be issued to the complainant. The decision will be confirmed in writing. The outcome will be shared with all relevant parties.

If further investigations are necessary and published timescales cannot be met, the Investigating Officer will set new time limits and send the complainant details of the new deadlines and explain the reasons for the delay.

A record of the Stage Two complaint, along with any documentation prepared during the Stage Two investigation, and (if applicable) the Stage Two meeting minutes, will be retained by the school or Trust team for six years (as applicable).

Stage 3a – Formal Complaint to Governing Board/Trust for Parental/Carer Complaints Only (Final Internal Stage)

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at the conclusion of Stage Two, they may progress to Stage Three.

- Request Stage Three in writing to the Governance Professional at the School, or the Trust (whichever is applicable) **within 10 school days** of the Stage Two outcome (requests after this may be accepted where exceptional circumstances apply). The complainant must state why they are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage Two.
- Panel: two impartial governors (or the Trust Board as the case may be) with no prior involvement (independent members sourced if needed), and one independent member who has no previous involvement with the complaint and has had no involvement with the management and running of the applicable school. In the event the complaint is about the Trust, a member independent of the Trust Board shall be appointed.

- Governance Professional aims to convene a meeting ***within 10 school days***; if not possible, an anticipated date will be provided.
- Parties may submit papers (***normally ≥3 school days prior***). Covert recordings are not accepted.

The complainant will be entitled to be accompanied at a Panel Meeting by a relative; friend or a representative. Each party may call witnesses in order to support their submissions to the Panel and details of these witnesses must be provided to the Governance Professional ***at least 3 school days*** prior to the Panel Meeting. The party subject to the complaint will be called the Respondent.

The Panel Chair has absolute discretion as to whether the Panel will consider any party's documents or hear witnesses. Minutes of the Panel Meeting will be taken by the Governance Professional.

At the Panel Meeting, the Chair of the Panel will explain how the Panel Meeting will be structured:

- The Panel will invite the complainant to outline the complaint, to refer the Panel to any of the documents submitted and to call on any witnesses they have identified. Each party will be entitled to put questions to the witnesses, once the complainant has completed their questions.
- The respondent will be invited to respond to the complaint, to refer to any of the previously submitted documents, and to call on any of their witnesses. The complainant and the Panel will also be entitled to put questions to the witnesses once the respondent has completed their questions.
- Once all parties have concluded their submissions, the Panel will be entitled to adjourn to consider its decision.
- A copy of the decision will be provided in writing ***within 5 school days*** of the Panel meeting to the complainant and the respondent. The outcome will also be delivered to any other relevant party as the Chair of the Panel deems necessary.
- A record of the Stage Three complaint, along with documentation submitted to the Panel, and the Panel Meeting minutes, will be retained by the school (or Trust as applicable) for six years.

Stage 3b – Formal Complaint to Governing Board/Trust for Non-Parental/Carer Complaints Only (Final Internal Stage)

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at the conclusion of Stage Two, they may progress the complaint to Stage Three in writing to the Governance Professional at the School, or the Trust (whichever is applicable), ***within 10 school days*** of the Stage Two outcome (requests after this may be accepted where exceptional circumstances apply). The complainant must state why they are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage Two and why they seek the complaint to be dealt with at Stage Three.

The Governance Professional (or Governance Professional to the Trust Board, as applicable) to request that the complaint be dealt with at Stage Three. (Contact details for the Governance Professional will be available from the School or Trust Office.) The complainant must set out why they are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage Two complaint and why they seek the complaint to be dealt with at Stage Three.

The Governance Professional will arrange for the Chair of the Local Governing Board (or Chair of the Trust Board (as applicable)) to review the Stage Two investigation **within 10 school days**. In the event that the Chair has dealt with the matter at previous stages, or the complaint is about them, another member of the applicable Board will be appointed to deal with the Stage Three complaint.

The complainant may be invited to attend a meeting with the person appointed to deal with the Stage Three complaint to discuss matters further. ("Stage Three Meeting"). For the avoidance of doubt, the arrangement of a Stage Three meeting is entirely at the discretion of the person appointed to deal with the Stage Three complaint.

The complainant will not be entitled to be accompanied at the Stage Three meeting without the prior permission of the appointed person.

If a Stage Three meeting is held, the complainant will be able to put forward their complaint in order to assist the appointed person to consider the issues before making a determination.

Minutes of the Stage Three Meeting will be taken by an appropriate person who is appointed.

The person appointed to deal with the Stage Three complaint will endeavour to communicate their decision about the complaint in writing **within 5 school days** of the Stage Three meeting or of being provided with the request for the complaint to be dealt with at Stage Three. If further time is required then the complainant will be notified.

A record of the Stage Three complaint, along with documentation submitted to the Panel, and the Panel Meeting minutes, will be retained by the school (or Trust as applicable) for six years.

Stage 4 – Refer to the Department for Education (DfE)

- If the school or trust has completed all stages and the complainant believes the process wasn't followed correctly, they may escalate to the **DfE**. The DfE does **not** reinvestigate the complaint itself — it will only consider whether the complaint was handled fairly and in accordance with legislation.
- The Complaint can be submitted electronically using the enquiries form on the DfE's website www.education.gov.uk/contactus, or alternatively by sending it to:

Department for Education
School complaints compliance unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

5. Security-Related Complaints (Protect Duty / ‘Martyn’s Law’)

Where a complaint raises issues of site security or the Protect Duty, the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be notified immediately. Such complaints will be logged, risk assessed and managed alongside safeguarding/health and safety processes. Urgent risks are to be escalated at once to senior leadership and, where appropriate, relevant authorities.

- Record: nature of concern, location, people affected, immediate controls and residual risk.
- Investigate with the Site/Operations Lead; capture evidence and actions taken.
- Provide feedback to the complainant within standard timescales unless operational security requires redaction.

6. Managing Serial/Unreasonable or AI-Generated Complaints

Staff will be protected from abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour. Where behaviour or volume of correspondence is unreasonable or AI-generated at scale, the Trust may put in place a communication plan and, if required, restrict contact channels and frequency while ensuring access to the procedure.

8. Record-Keeping, Confidentiality and Next Steps

- Records of complaints, evidence, outcomes and learning should be maintained. Records must be kept securely and confidentially.
- Where the complainant believes the Trust did not follow this procedure or acted unlawfully/unreasonably under education law after Stage Two, they may contact the Department for Education.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

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

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible

- co-operate with the school/Trust in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

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

- providing comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
 - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the school/trust as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the CEO/Headteacher or complaints panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

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

Complaints Co-ordinator *(this could be the CEO/ Headteacher/designated complaints trustee / governor or other staff member providing administrative support)*

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, CEO/Headteacher, Chair of Trustees/Governors, and Governance Professional to ensure the smooth running of the complaint's procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information
 - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Governance Professional to the Trust/Local Governing Board

The Governance Professional is the contact point for the complainant and the panel and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example, stage 1 paperwork, Trust/school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

Panel Chair

The Panel chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Governance Professional) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the panel is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

- If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the Trust/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 panel is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the panel 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 Governance Professional (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Panel Member

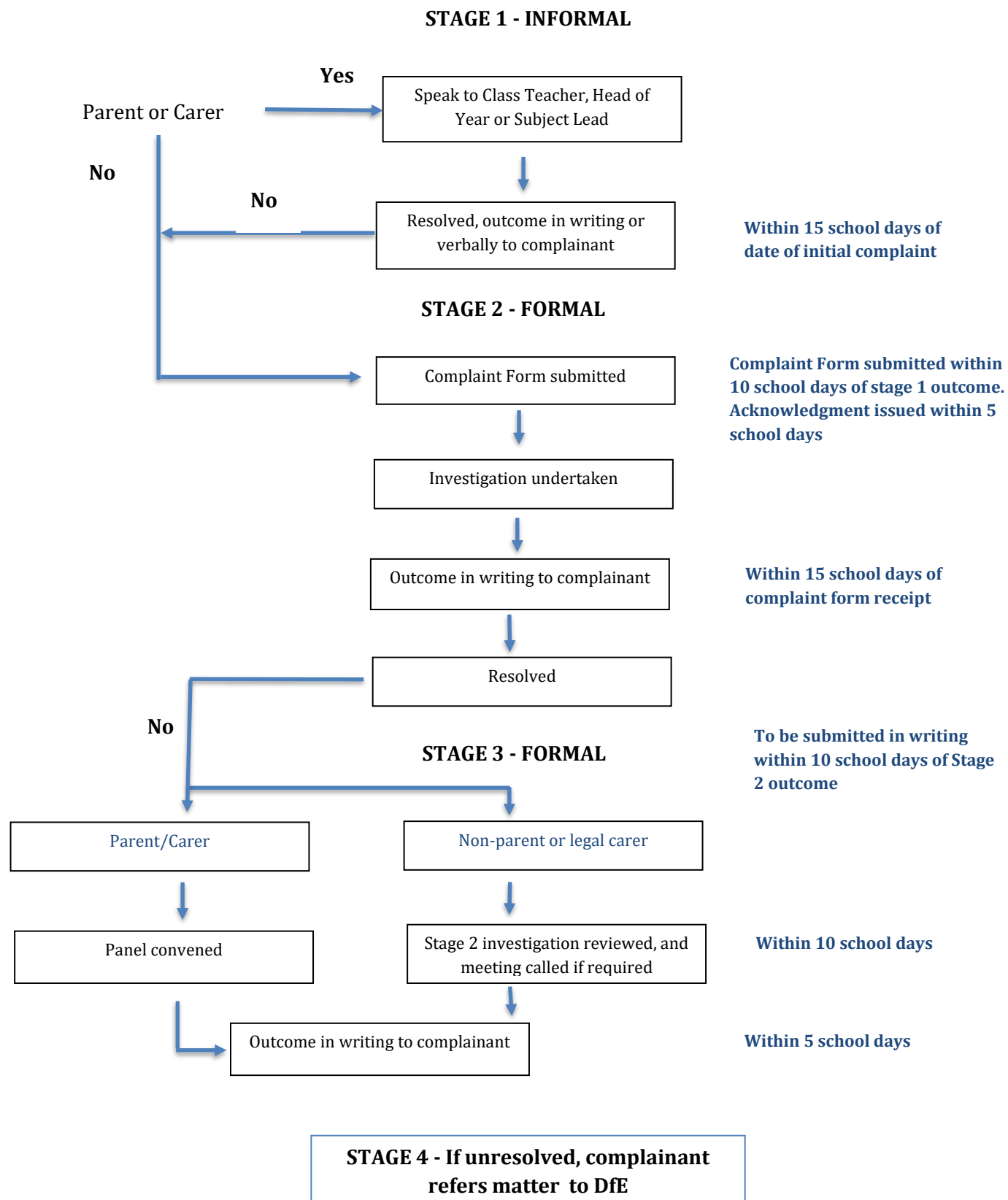
Panel members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
No trustee/governor may sit on the panel 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 Trust/school and the complainant
We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting.
Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting
Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
The panel should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.
If the child/young person is the complainant, the panel 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 panel 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 panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

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

10. Process Flowchart



APPENDIX A

STAGE TWO COMPLAINT FORM

Name of Complainant	
Name of Pupil (if applicable)	
Your relationship to the pupil (if applicable)	
Complainant's Address	
Complainant's Contact Number	
Relationship to [School/Trust]	
Reason for Complaint	

Details of complaint to be considered/investigation. Please include the names of anyone you have already spoken to at the School/Trust about it (continue on separate pages if required).

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

Give details of any documents you attach

Signature:

Date:

The completed form is to be addressed to the Headteacher (or CEO for Central Team matters) marked “Private and Confidential”.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, address it to the Chair of Governors via the Governance Professional (contact details for the Governance Professional will be available from the School or Trust Office).

If the complaint is about a Governor, address it to the Chair of Governors via the Governance Professional, or if it is about the Chair of Governors, address it to the Chair of Trustees via the Assistant to the Executive Board at the Trust Office.

If the complaint relates to the Trust, the complaint form should be directed to the CEO.

In the event the complaint is about the CEO the form should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees.

A complaint about the Chair of Trustees should be submitted to the Trust’s external auditors.