



Grays Convent

HIGH SCHOOL

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Including Handling complaints during the coronavirus (COVID-19)

This Policy was adopted by the Governing Body Summer 2021

This Policy will be reviewed Summer 2024 unless there is new legislation.

Mission Statement

At Grays Convent we recognise the value of each individual as a gift from God to the world. We are a Catholic school founded by the La Sainte Union Sisters and our ethos is one of unity, prayer, worship, service and work. We strive to follow the example of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary by enabling learning to take place in a caring and accepting community. We are blessed by Jesus the Good Shepherd, try to follow him in everything that we do, and in doing so make the most of our God given talents. We are one with God.

Introduction

This document sets out the procedure adopted by the Governing Body to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides, in accordance with Section 29(1) of the Education Act 2002. This policy follows non statutory guidance of the Department for Education's Best Practice Advice for School Complaints (2021). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures/best-practice-advice-for-school-complaints-procedures-2019>

The Local Authority is required to set up a procedure for dealing with certain types of complaints, for example, complaints about the curriculum or collective worship in a school. The Governing Body's complaints procedure does not replace the arrangements made for those types of complaint. In addition, there are certain complaints which fall outside the remit of the Governing Body's complaints procedure, for example, staff grievances, child protection or disciplinary procedures. For these Grays Convent High School has its own ratified policies.

In the case of any third party providers offering community facilities or services through the school premises, or using school facilities, the Governing Body will seek to ensure that these have their own complaints procedures in place.

Aims of this Policy

All staff at Grays Convent High School are regularly reminded of the procedures so that they know what to do when they receive a complaint.

The Grays Convent High School Complaints Procedure and Policy seeks to:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- be simple to understand and use
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- enables a full and fair investigation
- where necessary respects confidentiality
- addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- provides information to the school's senior leadership team and Governing Body so that services can be improved
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress

General Principles

The difference between a Complaint and a Concern

A 'concern' may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be generally defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that complaint and concerns are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures through contacting the Headteacher. We take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

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

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Grays Convent High School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

Who can make a complaint?

Any person, including members of the general public or parents or carers no longer at the school, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that Grays Convent High School provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions). We do not limit complaints to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

In accordance with administrative law principles, complainants will be given the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full, unless we possess clear evidence that the complaint meets the serial complaint criteria. (see below)

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within **three months of the incident** or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Grays Convent High School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals 	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Thurrock Local Authority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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): Trevor Willis (Mon, Tue, Fri) & Adetutu 'Tutu' Temowo (Wed, Thu). Details can be found in our Child Protection Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school* 	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions . *complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure covered here and on our school website.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances 	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff conduct 	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school'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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Grays Convent High School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of you, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or Headteacher in the first instance. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint to either the Headteacher or the Governing Body.

Complainants should not approach individual governors 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.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mrs Johnson, the headteacher, via the school office or her PA. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to Mrs Laurie Eve (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body and sent via Mrs L Albrow, PA to the Headteacher at the email address headteacherpa@graysconvent.thurrock.sch.uk. Please mark your correspondence as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

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

The school distinguishes between a concern and a complaint. By taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage we endeavour to keep the numbers that develop into formal complaints to a minimum.

This document deals with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure should not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the individual concerned will receive the first approach. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary. Where appropriate, some complaints may be made to the Headteacher directly.

Handling complaints during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Coronavirus (COVID-19) might affect the schools' usual processes and timescales for complaints. However, Grays Convent High school will still consider complaints, particularly those relating to the provision of remote education, as per our remote learning policy on our school website.

Contact Thurrock local council or call the police on 101 if you're told a child is at risk.

Schools and complainants can contact DfE for more information about school complaints.

Ofsted will consider complaints from parents that relate to the school as a whole. This includes complaints about:

- the quality of education being provided, including remote education
- pupils' wellbeing and safety

Ofsted normally expects parents to seek to resolve any concerns with the school in the first instance. See Ofsted's complaints process.

Dealing with Complaints - Initial concerns

Time-Limits

A parent, pupil or other complainant should be able to expect to have a response, even if not the final response, to their complaint within **three working days** of having made the complaint or concern.

The response may initially be a phone call. Many concerns are resolved at this stage and the school has a **24 hour call return policy**. Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant will be informed of the new deadline and an explanation for

the delay. Further contact may be in writing or at a meeting with written confirmation of the outcome.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Grays Convent High School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Dealing with Complaints – Formal procedures

When initial attempts to resolve a concern are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further, then formal complaints procedures will be followed.

Investigating complaints

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint must seek to

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- identify areas of agreement between the parties as well as clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary)
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning

Vexatious Complaints

The Grays Convent High School complaints procedure seeks to limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the Governing Body can inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

The Formal Complaints Procedure

The Stages of Complaints

The Formal Complaints Procedure has two school-based stages:

- Stage one: complaint heard by the headteacher
- Stage two: complaint heard by the Governing Body's complaints appeal panel

Any complaint will be logged in the Headteacher's office by the Headteacher's PA.

Stage One: Complaint heard by Headteacher

should be made in writing at first to the Clerk to the Governing Body, and sent via Mrs L Albrow, PA to the Headteacher at the email address: headteacherpa@graysconvent.thurrock.sch.uk. Please mark your correspondence as Private and Confidential.

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **three** school days.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within **three school days** of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

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

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body or (Brentwood Diocese or the La Sainte Union sisters). At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage Two: Complaint heard by the Governing Body

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within **three school days** of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **three school days**.

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

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 7 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Grays Convent High School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up

the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

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

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

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

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.

At least 7 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 7 school days before the meeting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Grays Convent High with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 7 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Grays Convent High School.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent, co-opted governors.

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

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

Next steps: Possible further action by the complainant

An unsatisfied complainant can always take a complaint further by approaching the Local Authority, Diocese Body (DB), LSU trustees, or other external agency who may be providing an independent appeal or review. A complainant has the right to request an independent panel, if they feel there may be bias in the proceedings.

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Grays Convent High School. They will consider whether Grays Convent High School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Unreasonable Complaints and Serial complaints

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

Grays Convent defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

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

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone email or in writing or electronically:

- maliciously
- aggressively
- using threats, intimidation or violence
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- knowing it to be false; using falsified information

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Grays Convent High School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. Legal action may be pursued. This may include banning an individual from the site of Grays Convent.

Barring from the School Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Schools will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask him/her to leave school premises. In serious cases, the headteacher or the local authority or the Diocese can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. Schools should always give the parent the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the headteacher or Chair of Governors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

Duplicate complaints

After closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, if Grays Convent High School receives a duplicate complaint from:

- a spouse
- a partner
- a grandparent
- a child

If the complaint is about the same subject, we will inform the new complainant that the school has already considered that complaint and the local process is complete. We will advise the new complainant to contact the Department of Education should they be dissatisfied with the school's handling of the original complaint.

Any new aspects to the original complaint will be investigated and dealt with to the full extent of the complaints procedure.

Complaint campaigns

If Grays Convent High School becomes the focus of a campaign and receives large volumes of complaints:

- all based on the same subject
- from complainants unconnected with the school

Following an internal investigation into the subject matter by the Headteacher/ Senior Leadership Team the school will respond either by:

- sending a template response to all complainants or
- publishing a single response on the school's website

If complainants in this case remain dissatisfied they may refer to the "Next Steps" at the end of this policy.

Publicising the Complaints Procedures

There is a legal requirement for the Complaints Procedures to be publicised. Details of the Grays Convent High School Complaints Procedures will be included in:

- the information given to new parents when their children join the school
- documents supplied to community users including course information or letting agreements
- the school website.

Recording Complaints

- We will record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. The headteacher will be responsible for these records and hold them centrally.
- We are aware that complainants have a right to copies of these records under the General Data Protection Policy, available on our website.<http://fluencycontent2-schoolwebsite.netdna-ssl.com/FileCluster/GraysConvent/MainFolder/Home/About-us/GDPR/11BGDPRRights-AdvicetoParents-Guardians.pdf>

Review

The Full Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints through the Termly Headteacher's Report and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the formal procedure and make changes where necessary. Complaints information shared with the Governors will not usually name individuals.

We consider the monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the Governing Body to be a useful tool in evaluating the school's performance. Should underlying issues be identified we

will seek to address these in the School Improvement Plan and the SEF.

The Complaints Procedure itself will be reviewed by the Governing Body every three years unless legislation changes.

Responsibility for reviewing the procedure will be delegated to the Staffing committee of the Governing Body.

Roles and Responsibilities during a Complaint or Appeal

The Complainant

The complainant or person who makes the complaint will receive a more effective response to the complaint if he/she:-

- explains the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operates with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- responds promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- asks for assistance as needed
- treats all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrains from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

The Complaints Co-ordinator (this could be the headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support such as the clerk to the governing body)

The complaints co-ordinator should:-

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information
 - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

The Investigator

The Investigator is the person involved in Stages 1 and 2 of the procedure. The Investigator's role can include:

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

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the

- complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
 - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems. The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

The Panel Clerk (this could be Clerk to the Governors or the Complaints Coordinator)

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant for the panel meeting and is expected to:

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

The Panel / Committee Chair

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

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

- comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Panel/ Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant
We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting
Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.
If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.
However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

Concern/Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Mrs P Johnson (Headteacher) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

If this complaint is about the headteacher, please return this complaint to the Clerk to the Governors and send via Mrs L Albrow, PA to the Headteacher at the email address: headteacherpa@graysconvent.thurrock.sch.uk or Mrs Laurie Eve, Chair of Governors, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

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

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: