



Compliments and Complaints Procedure Policy

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Northgate Scholl Arts College (Academy Trust) **Compliments and Complaints Procedure**

Compliments

It is always good to receive a compliment.

Compliments received from young people, staff, parents/carers, local authorities and other external agencies will be properly recorded, acknowledged (where appropriate) and conveyed to the individuals being thanked and to all other interested parties. A compliment may refer to the young people, staff, a group/team or Northgate School Arts College (Academy Trust) as a whole.

Compliments and expressions of appreciation are valuable in monitoring the effectiveness of Northgate School Arts College (Academy Trust).

Compliments can provide useful learning points and examples of good practice which can be shared throughout the organisation to promote our young people's self-esteem and encourage staff to continue to provide and improve on the excellent provision we offer.

An individual wishing to make a compliment can do so either:

- a. In person
- b. Via an advocate
- c. By telephone
- d. By letter
- e. By email to bursar@northgate.northants-ecl.gov.uk
- f. Via the school website www.northgate.northants.sch.uk

All compliments will be brought to the attention of the Executive Head Teacher and if applicable the staff concerned will be advised of the details of the compliment by their line manager.

Compliments and expressions of appreciation will be announced in whole school assemblies and/or celebrations held throughout the year. If applicable they will also be posted on our website and within our newsletters.

A record of all compliments will be maintained for all stakeholders to view. This will be kept in the main reception area on all sites.

Complaints

We take all complaints seriously.

We are sorry if anyone is not happy with us, and we want to put things right if we possibly can. We know that complaints give us valuable feedback and help us to improve our services – we want to listen and learn.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

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 defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. NSAC (AT) takes concerns seriously and will 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 respect your views. In these cases, the Executive Head Teacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with the concern, they 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, we will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint procedure.

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 a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or Executive Head and if this, with a response expected within 48 hours. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

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 Executive Head) should be made in the first instance, to Miss S. Webb (Executive Head Teacher).

Complaints that involve or are about the Head Teacher should be addressed to Mr M Kendall (the chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at **Appendix 1**. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a 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.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Executive Head Teacher 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 incidents 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. (See **Appendix 2**, Complaints Procedure Timeline)

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by NSAC (AT), 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 Northampton Local Authority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Matters likely to require Child Protection Investigation	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>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). <insert LADO/MASHdetails>.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exclusion of children from school*	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whistleblowing	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p>

	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 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>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.</p>
<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 of 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 the procedures being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against the 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.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, NSAC (AT) 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.

Stage 1 (Informal)

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

The Executive Head Teacher will record the date of when the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days.

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

Note: The Executive Head Teacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership teams but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Executive Head Teacher (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 Executive Head Teacher will provide a formal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Executive Head Teacher 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 the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The Executive Head Teacher 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 Executive Head Teacher, 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 Executive Head Teacher or a 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. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 2 (Formal)

Formal complaints can be raised:

- By letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person
- By third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times, and names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office on 01604 714098, or email bursar@northgate.northants-ecl.gov.uk and seek a resolution. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting, and should inform their school of their identity of their companion in advance.

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

The Executive Head Teacher (or other person appointed by the Executive Head Teacher for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 10 school days.

How to escalate a complaint

Complaints can be escalated by contacting the clerk to the governing board:

- By letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person
- Through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

The clerk will need the details of the complaint as set out above, as well as details from the complainant on how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 5 school days.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board in writing within 5 school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The clerk will acknowledge receipt of the request within 3 school days.

Stage 3 (Formal)

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to stage 3- 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. (Governors reserve the right to request panel support by a legal representative and/or suitable qualified independent advisor).

A request to escalate to stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

The clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge the receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 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 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 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 NSAC (AT) 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. **(See Appendix 3).**

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 10 days 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 5 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 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 meeting 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
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

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

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

Clerk to the Governing Body

The clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee 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, 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.

Committee Chair

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

- both parties are asked (via the clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by 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 the 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 external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

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 in 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 the agreement might not always be possible if the parent wished the child/young person to attend a part meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount

Stage 3 – Appeal to Panel of Governors

Guidelines

- Complaints rarely reach the appeal stage, but it is important that governing bodies are prepared to deal with them. At this stage, the Chair of Governors may wish to seek advice from the legal team/HR provider.
- The aim of the appeal to a panel of governors is to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it may only be possible to establish the facts of a situation and make recommendations about future action, and to satisfy the complainant that their complaints have been taken seriously.
- It is important should a complaint reach the appeal stage that the governing body is impartial and independent and is seen to be so. Individual complaints should not be considered by the full governing body. The governing body should therefore establish a panel to deal with complaints, by nominating a pool of five governors from which three, non-staff, can be drawn for any hearing.
- Panel members should have had no prior involvement with the complaint. Generally, the Chair of Governors is not on the panel as she/he may be involved at the earlier stage. The Governing body should have regard to the advantages of having a mix of types of governor on the panel and be sensitive to issues of equal opportunity in the composition of the panel.
- Individual governors should not get involved in looking into complaints before this stage to avoid prejudicing their potential involvement. If individual governors are approached by parents or others with complaints, they should refer the complainant to the schools complaints procedure, making the necessary introduction to a member of staff or headteacher if appropriate.
- Complaints that reach the appeal stage will do so because the complainant is not satisfied with the response so far. In this situation it is perhaps helpful for the governing body to view any complaint as being against the school rather than an individual staff member whose actions may have lead to the original complaint.
- All except for the governor's panel and any advisers should then withdraw and the panel should consider the evidence. This should include a judgement about the validity of the complaint; appropriate action to be taken by the school and/or the parent; and where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the schools' systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.
- The school should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes is kept confidentially on file in the school. This should be separate from pupils' personal records.
- The broad outcomes recommended by the panel can be reported to the next full governing body or appropriate committee with the identity of all those taking part kept confidential. The governing body should monitor implementation of the recommendations.

Model procedure for the Conduct of a Stage 3 Governors Panel Hearing

If the complaint is:

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

Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of independent governors

The response will detail any action 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 the school will take to resolve the complaint.

Stage 4 – Complaining to the EFSA and Ofsted

If you feel that the Governing Body or Northgate School Arts College (Academy Trust) have acted unreasonably about your concerns, you can write to the Education Funding Agency. Where possible you will need to put your complaint in writing and list the steps you have already taken and the responses you have received.

Complaints about Northgate School Arts College (Academy Trust) should be sent to:

- Via the Department for Education's school complaint form (using the link below)
<https://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolperformance/school-complaints-form>

or

- By post to:
Department for Education, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2GJ

Alternatively, you may wish to complain to OFSTED. You should contact the helpdesk on 0300 1234 234 or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Staff on the help desk will discuss your concerns with you, advise you about whether to put your complaint in writing or suggest other ways to deal with your concerns.

To make a formal complaint to OFSTED you will need to write to:

Enquiries, National Business Unit, OFSTED, 5th, 6th and 7th Floors, Piccadilly Gates, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Further information can be found on the OFSTED website:

www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/complaints-ofsted-about-schools-guidance-for-parents

General Principles

- The resolution of a complaint provides the potential opportunity for the school to improve its practice and develop a strong partnership with parents.
- The complaints procedure should be easily accessible and well publicised so that parents know how to raise concerns.
- It is desirable for any concern/complaint to be addressed by a member of staff/governors at a level closest to the cause for the concern.
- Procedures should be as speedy as possible, consistent with fairness to all. (suggested timescales are provided in the model for schools to adopt or adapt to suit their circumstances).
- A complaint is distinct from any formal disciplinary procedure. Staff who may be questioned as part of a complaints procedure must be treated fairly and have an

opportunity to put their case. They should be offered support in responding to any investigation into a complaint.

- If it becomes apparent to the Executive Head Teacher, Head of School or Chair of Governors that the parent's concern/complaint has the potential to be a disciplinary issue, advice should immediately be sought from the School's H R provider.
- Confidentiality is important in securing the confidence of all concerned. Conversations and correspondence must be treated with discretion. Parents need to feel confident that a complaint will not disadvantage their child. However, the parties should realise that some information may have to be shared to carry out a thorough investigation.
- If the investigation of a complaint shows that it is justified, then the school should consider how to make amends in an appropriate way.
- Staff and Governors in schools should have the opportunity to take part in training or briefing to raise their awareness of the procedures and develop their skills in dealing with people who wish to complain.
- All complaints should be recorded and monitored to identify issues and allow any lessons to be learned by the school.
- Every complaint should be acknowledged as 'genuinely felt' by the complainant.

STAGE 1

If you have any concern or complain about the matters within the school, please let the Executive Head Teacher know immediately. It will be investigated fully, with the help of appropriate members of the school staff. Every effort will be made in an informal way, to settle the matter quickly and you will then be asked to say whether you are satisfied with the result. If the complaint involves the Executive Head Teacher you should initially write to the chair of Governors and then to a Governor Committee if this is not resolved.

STAGE 2

Should you, for any reason, not be satisfied, an opportunity will be provided for you to take your complaint to the school's Governing Body. You may also express your views in person at a meeting with the governors. You may bring a friend with you, if you choose to attend the meeting, and you will be sent written details explaining how the Governors will hear your complaint.

Your complaints will be fully investigated and the decision which the governors reach will be sent to you in writing.

STAGE 3

If you are dissatisfied, you may complain to Department of Education or OFSTED.

STAGE 4

We expected that very few complaints would reach stage 3. If they do and you are still not satisfied parents/carers may take the matter up with the Secretary of State for Education.

If a complaint is made about Religious Education or Collective Worship, Sex Education or Drug Education Stages 1 and 2 are also followed.

The most important part of this procedure is Stage 1, which asks parents and Northgate School to do everything possible to settle complaints in an informal way, and thus avoid the need for more formal steps.

Complaint Form



Please complete and return to either Miss Webb or Mrs Hagen (Executive Head/Clerk) 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 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:

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 in seeking a solution in 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:

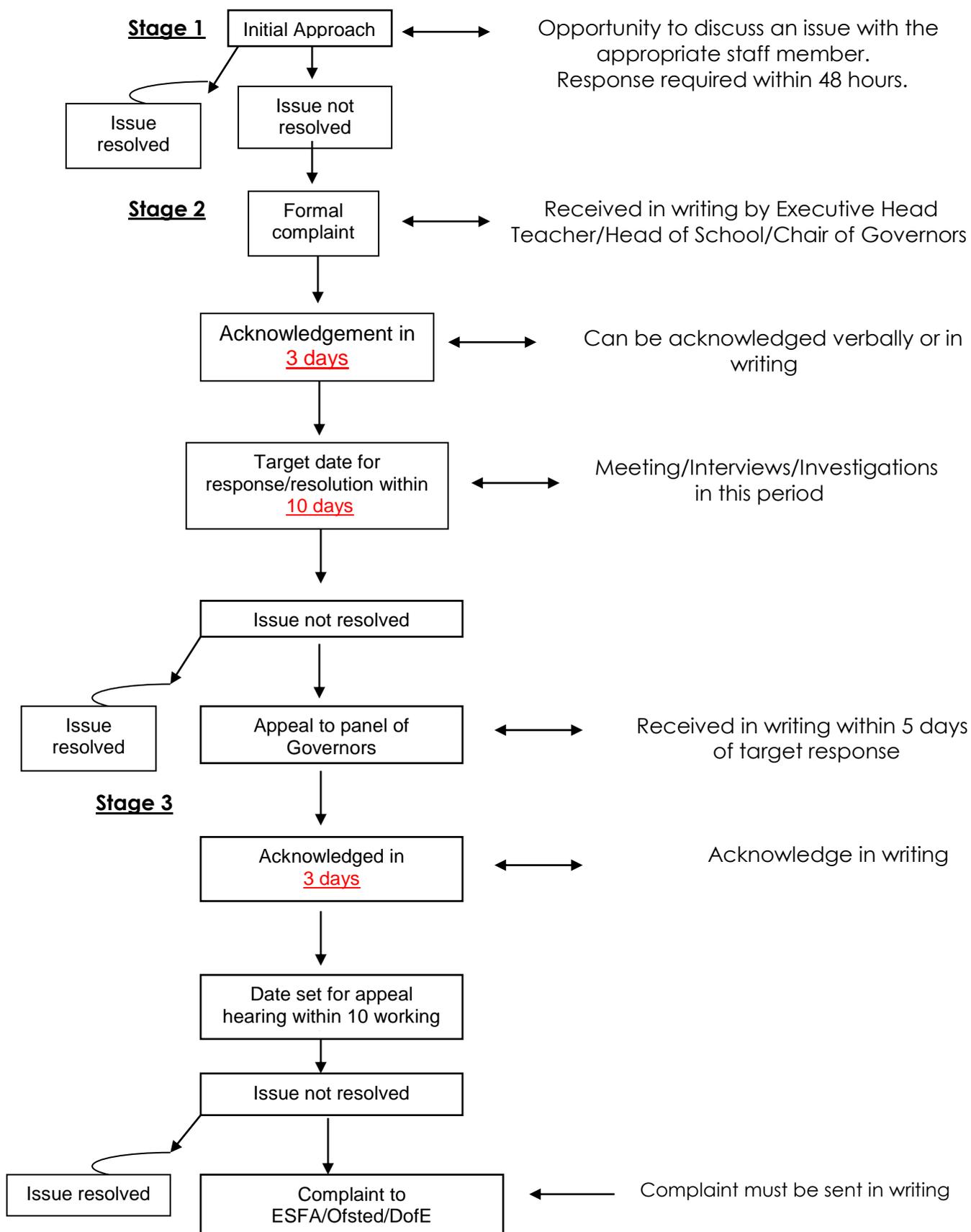
- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
- 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
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the Executive Head Teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Executive Head Teacher 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.

Complaints Procedure Timeline



Model procedure for the conduct of Stage 3 Governors Panel Hearing

1. The chair of the committee should invite all parties (except any witnesses) into the room, introduce and explain the role of each person.
2. The chair should explain to all present that the purpose of the hearing is to review the complaint and try to resolve it and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it may be possible to establish the facts of the situation and make recommendations about future action.
3. The chair should then ascertain whether the proposed procedure is acceptable. If so, the meeting will proceed along the following lines.
 - The complainant describes his/hers complaint and may call witnesses
 - The Executive Head Teacher may seek clarification from the complainant and any witnesses.
 - The Governors' Committee and/or its advisors may seek clarification from the complainant or any witnesses
 - The Executive Head Teacher will respond to the complainant and may call witnesses.
 - The complainant may seek clarification from the Executive Head Teacher and any witnesses.
 - The Governors Committee (including any Advisors) may seek clarification from the Executive Head Teacher and any witnesses.
 - The Executive Head teacher will be given the opportunity to sum up.
 - The complainant will be given the opportunity to sum up.
 - Both parties will leave the room to allow the Committee to deliberate but any advisers may remain to offer technical and procedural advice.
4. The Committee should make a decision or judgement on:-
 - the validity of the complaint
 - appropriate action to be taken by the school and or/parent
 - and, where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.
5. The decision or judgement will be confirmed in writing within five days.