



# Complaints Policy

## 2022 - 2025

<b>Author:</b>	<b>Luton Borough Council, DFE and ACE</b>
<b>Date Updated:</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> August 2022</b>
<b>Approval Level:</b>	<b>Senior Leadership Team</b>
<b>SLT Review Date:</b>	<b>22<sup>nd</sup> August 2022</b>
<b>Review Cycle:</b>	<b>Three Years</b>
<b>Next Review Date:</b>	<b>July 2025</b>

The Management Committee and the Headteacher are committed to providing the best educational experience they can for all pupils attending the Avenue Centre for Education (ACE). They recognise the value to all concerned of dealing fairly, speedily and effectively with any complaint against their decisions, actions or omissions, which a pupil or parent or other aggrieved person may have. To this end, they have adopted the underlying principles and procedures set out in this document.

## 1. Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to Parents or Carers of children that are registered at ACE. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to ACE 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.

## 2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

ACE aims to build an open culture where issues are spoken about and resolved at an early stage through open and respectful communication. However, we understand that part of having this culture includes having a robust complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint is:

- 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. ACE 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 will respect your views. In these cases, the Complaints Officer at [businessmanager@avenuecentre.co.uk](mailto:businessmanager@avenuecentre.co.uk) will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Complaints Officer at [businessmanager@avenuecentre.co.uk](mailto:businessmanager@avenuecentre.co.uk) 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, ACE will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedures.

Our complaints procedure:

- Encourages resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;

- Is easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- Is **simple** to understand and use;
- Is **impartial**;
- Is **non-adversarial**;
- Allows **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- Ensures a full and **fair** investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- Respects people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- Addresses all the issues and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary;
- Provides **information** to the Management Committee so that services can be improved.

The aims of this policy are:

- To deal with any complaint against the Pupil Referral Unit and its services, or any individual connected with it by following the correct procedures.
- To deal with all complaints thoroughly and by being open, honest and fair when dealing with the complainant.

Where a complainant is a pupil under the age of 18 years, the complaint may be pursued only by, or on behalf of, the child's parent or carer. Where someone other than a pupil or a parent/carer is pursuing a complaint on his or her behalf, this can be done only with the express consent of the pupil or parent concerned.

All staff will be made aware of this Complaints Policy. Staff are expected to be familiar with our process of dealing with complaints so that they can offer assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

The Complaints Policy should be read in conjunction with the Managing Serious and Unreasonable Complaints Policy at <https://avenuecentre.co.uk/managing-serious-and-unreasonable-complaints-policy/>

### 3. 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.

Complainants should not approach individual Members (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 4 of the complaint procedures.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher at [head@avenuecentre.co.uk](mailto:head@avenuecentre.co.uk) or in writing to Headteacher, Avenue Centre for Education, Cutenhoe Road, Luton, LU1 3NJ. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed directly to the Chair of Management Committee at [chair@avenuecentre.co.uk](mailto:chair@avenuecentre.co.uk) or in writing to Chair of Management Committee, Avenue Centre for Education, Cutenhoe Road, Luton, LU1 3NJ. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Management Committee, any individual Member (Governor) or the whole Management Committee should be addressed under the Managing Complaints Against Governors Policy at <https://avenuecentre.co.uk/managing-complaints-against-members-policy/>

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 ACE at telephone number [01582 359370](tel:01582359370). 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.

#### **4. Anonymous complaints**

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

#### **5. Time scale for raising a concern or complaint**

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. ACE will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

#### **6. Complaints received outside of term time**

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

#### **7. Scope of this Complaints Policy**

This policy covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by ACE, 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"> <li>• Admissions to schools</li> <li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>• School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul>	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Luton Borough Council at <a href="https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/pages/contactus.aspx">https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/pages/contactus.aspx</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>	<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) at <a href="mailto:mash@luton.gov.uk">mash@luton.gov.uk</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p><i>Complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure at <a href="https://avenuecentre.co.uk/behaviour-policy-schematic/">https://avenuecentre.co.uk/behaviour-policy-schematic/</a></i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors at <a href="https://avenuecentre.co.uk/whistleblowing-policy/">https://avenuecentre.co.uk/whistleblowing-policy/</a></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: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</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 Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures at <a href="https://avenuecentre.co.uk/hr-policies/">https://avenuecentre.co.uk/hr-policies/</a></p>

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the 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> <p><a href="https://avenuecentre.co.uk/hr-policies/">https://avenuecentre.co.uk/hr-policies/</a></p>
<p>Complaints about individual pupil records.</p>	<p>Complaints about pupil records and the data within these records will be dealt with under the GDPR procedures and Subject Access Request procedures at</p> <p><a href="https://avenuecentre.co.uk/ace-gdpr-policy-and-processes/">https://avenuecentre.co.uk/ace-gdpr-policy-and-processes/</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Curriculum - content</li> </ul>	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at:</p> <p><a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a></p>

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 ACE 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.

## 8. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, ACE 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.

## 9. Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

## 10. Process for dealing with complaints

When complaints are received, the following principles underpin our approach:

- People will be dealt with courteously and in a sensitive and helpful manner.
- Things will be put right where it is clear the Pupil Referral Unit has not given the service that Parents/Carers have the right to expect.
- Complaints will be analysed so that the views of Parents/Carers can be taken into account when the Pupil Referral Unit plans for the future.
- The Headteacher may delegate an investigation to a senior member of staff in the Pupil Referral Unit.
- If the complainant has not had a response within the timescale, this does not mean that the complaint is upheld.

The complainant may make his or her representations at each stage of the procedures in person, accompanied by a friend if so desired. The name of anyone accompanying a complainant should be communicated in advance and in what capacity they are attending. If the complainant wishes to be accompanied by a friend who is a legal professional, they cannot contribute to the meeting in a legal capacity. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to ensure that information is available to complainants in languages other than English and arrangements made for an interpreter to be present during any oral representation.

### 10.1. Stage one: informal complaint

Many enquiries and concerns expressed by Parents/Carers and others about the Pupil Referral Unit can be dealt with satisfactorily by a class teacher, Headteacher of Department or other more senior members of staff without the need to resort to the formal complaints procedures. We value informal meetings and discussions, and encourage Parents/Carers to approach staff with any concerns they may have, and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding.

If any concerns raised are not resolved after discussions with the complainant, the staff member has a duty to inform the Headteacher. Parents/Carers should be encouraged to settle the matter with the Headteacher or designated member of staff. The majority of straightforward complaints and problems are likely to be resolved at this point.

If the concerns are about the Headteacher, these should be referred directly to the Chair of Management Committee at [chair@avenuecentre.co.uk](mailto:chair@avenuecentre.co.uk)

#### 10.1.1. Stage one: timescale

It is reasonable that Parents/Carers seeking to resolve matters of concern to them should receive a response within **5 - 10 working days** of making initial contact, unless there is a good reason not to do so. The response should offer the complainant a full explanation or set out the steps that are proposed to resolve the complaint.

## **10.2. Stage two: formal complaint**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the school's initial response, the person concerned may then submit a formal complaint to the Headteacher.

This must be done in writing, making it clear that it is a formal complaint and specifying its nature as exactly as possible and details of how the matter has been dealt with so far, attaching any documents the complainant wishes to rely on. The complainant should also include a clear statement of how he or she would like the Pupil Referral Unit to resolve the complaint.

If the Headteacher undertakes the investigation at Stage 2, they will be exempt from sitting on any Complaints Committee convened to hear a complaint escalated to Stage 3. The outcome at this stage may be:

- The decision reached and the reason for it.
- Any action taken or proposed including the details of any request made to those complained against.
- What actions will be taken to resolve the complaint.

In such instances where the complaint falls outside the scope of the Complaints Policy, the decision of the Headteacher is final. If the complaint is about the Headteacher and outside the scope of the Complaints Policy, then the decision of the Chair of the Management Committee is final.

***Please see Appendix A for a Stage 2 Formal Complaints Form, Appendix B for the Stage 2 Formal Complaint Procedures Checklist and Appendix C for Roles and Responsibilities.***

### **10.2.1. Stage two: timescale**

A written acknowledgement of the complaint should be received by the complainant within **3 working days** and a response within **15 - 20 working days** from receipt of the complaint.

The Headteacher will consider complaints as quickly as possible. If in their view, the complaint falls outside the scope of the Complaints Policy, the Headteacher will advise the complainant of any other recourse they may have. If it is clear that the investigation of the relevant complaint is complex and will take some time, the Headteacher will notify the complainant of this fact and of progress during consideration of the complaint.



### 10.3. Stage three: Governance Complaints Panel

Where the complaint falls within the scope of the Complaints Policy, if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage Two response, then they should put this in writing to the Governance Clerk at [clerk@avenuecentre.co.uk](mailto:clerk@avenuecentre.co.uk) within **10 working days** of receiving any decision at Stage Two. The referral should include all documentation the complainant wishes to rely on. The complainant should set out the reason(s) why they believe the action or actions taken by ACE in relation to the complaint during the first two stages of the Complaints Policy are insufficient. The governance Complaints Panel will meet within **10 working days** of the complaint being received by the Governance Clerk.

A governance Complaints Panel of three members with *delegated powers* would convene to hear the complaint at a meeting attended by the complainant, the Headteacher and witnesses. Written evidence is submitted in advance to all parties and verbal evidence given at the hearing.

The outcome will be one of the following:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, it should be referred to the Chair of the Management Committee under Stage Three.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

***Please see Appendix D for Stage 3 Governance Complaints Panel Checklist.***

#### 10.3.1. Stage three: timescale

A written acknowledgement of the complaint should be received by the complainant within **3 working days** and a response within **15 – 20 working days** from receipt of the complaint.

The Chair of the Management Committee will consider complaints against the Headteacher as quickly as possible. If in their view, the complaint falls outside the scope of the Complaints Policy, the Chair will advise the complainant of any other recourse they may have. If it is clear that the investigation of the relevant complaint is complex and will take some time, the Chair will notify the complainant of this fact and of progress during consideration of the complaint.

## 11. Further stages

Following the governance Complaints Panel review of the complaint at Stage Three, it is open to the complainant to pursue their complaint with the Local Authority (LA). The governance Complaints Panel will give full consideration to any recommendations or

directions the LA may make. The complainant will be advised of this course of action should they remain dissatisfied with a decision made by the governance Complaints Panel.

If the complainant believes the school and the Local Authority 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 3 and worked with the Local Authority.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by ACE. They will consider whether ACE 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](http://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.

## Appendix A – Stage 2: Formal Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher at [head@avenuecentre.co.uk](mailto:head@avenuecentre.co.uk) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>
<b>Address:</b>  <b>Postcode:</b> <b>Day time telephone number:</b> <b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.</b>

**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:**

## Appendix B – Stage 2: Formal Complaint Procedures Checklist

TASK	Comments	RAG Rating
Enter date stage 2 formal complaint received	Date:	
<p>Headteacher or Chair of Management Committee to acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant within <b>3 working days</b>.</p> <p><b>Notes:</b> Within this response, the Headteacher/Chair will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher/ Chair can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.</p>	Date:	
Enter final date to inform complainant of the outcomes of the formal complaint. <b>Maximum 15 – 20 working days</b> .	Date:	
<p>Enter date investigation commenced.</p> <p>Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of ACE’s Senior Leadership Team but not the decision to be taken. During the investigation, the Headteacher (or investigator) will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.</li> <li>• Keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.</li> </ul>	Date:	
Enter date investigation concluded and the Headteacher/Chair updated.	Date:	
<p>Enter the date the Headteacher/Chair provided a formal written response, within <b>15 – 20 working days</b> of the date of receipt of the complaint.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> 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 ACE will take to resolve the complaint. The Headteacher/Chair will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome</p>	Date:	
If the Headteacher/Chair is unable to meet the deadline to issue a formal written response to the claimant, they will provide the complainant with an update. Enter date of update to claimant.	Date:	

## Appendix C – 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 Pupil Referral Unit 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 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.

## **Complaints Co-ordinator**

(This could be the Headteacher / Designated Complaints 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, Headteacher, Chair of Management Committee, 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.

## **Governance Clerk**

The Governance 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 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.

## Complaints 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).

## Complaints 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.

**Appendix D – Stage 3: Governance Complaints Panel Checklist  
(Final Stage of the Complaints Procedure)**

TASK	Comments	RAG Rating
<p>Governance Clerk to enter date stage 3 formal complaint received.</p>	<p>Date:</p>	
<p>Was the stage 3 formal complaint received within <b>10 working days</b> of the stage 2 formal complaint response letter?</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.</p>	<p>Yes / No</p>	
<p>Governance Clerk to acknowledge receipt of the stage 3 formal complaint to the complainant within <b>3 working days</b>.</p>	<p>Date:</p>	
<p>Governance Clerk to put together a governance Complaints Panel consisting of a minimum of 3, impartial, Members who are available. The Members should have no prior knowledge of the complaint.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> If there are fewer than three governors from ACE available, the Governance 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 3.</p>	<p>Member 1:</p> <p>Member 2:</p> <p>Member 3:</p>	
<p>Governance Clerk to liaise with Members to arrange a convenient date, time and venue for the governance Complaints Panel to meet.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The meeting must take place within <b>10 working days</b> from the date the Governance Clerk received the stage 3 formal complaint.</p>	<p>Date of Complaints Panel Meeting date, time and venue:</p>	
<p>Governance Clerk to write to the complainant to inform them of the date, time and venue of the meeting within <b>5 working days</b> from the date the Governance Clerk received the stage 3 formal complaint and request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Governance 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.</p>	<p>Date Complainant Notified:</p>	

TASK	Comments	RAG Rating
<p>Governance Clerk to circulate any written materials to all parties at least <b>3 working days</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> 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.</p>	Date:	
<p>Complainant to inform the Governance Clerk if they are bringing 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.</p>	Name of Complainant's Support:	
<p>Prior to the meeting, the Members will elect a Chair of the governance Complaints Panel.</p>	Chair:	
<p>Governance Clerk to email governance Complaints Panel Terms of Reference, Complaints Policy and Procedures to the Members.</p>	Date:	
<p>The governance Complaints Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uphold the complaint in whole or in part</li> <li>• dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.</li> </ul>	Decision:	
<p>If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the governance Complaints Panel will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint</li> <li>• where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.</li> </ul>	Decision:	
<p>The Chair of the Complaints Panel will provide the complainant and ACE with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 working days of the Complaints Panel meeting.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the LA if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by ACE.</p>	Date:	