

# Sydenham School Complaints Policy



High  
Performance  
Learning

Approved by: Full Governing Body

Date: 16/03/2023

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## Summary of Changes

### 2022

1. 'Exclusions' to 'suspensions and permanent exclusions to reflect current DFE terminology
2. 11. Persistent complaints developed to include more detail and duplicate complaints  
Additional sections 18- 21: Record keeping learning lessons, monitoring arrangements and links with other policies

### 2021

3. Vexacious/malicious complaints
4. Flow chart
5. Links with other policies

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## 1. Rationale

Sydenham School wishes to ensure that all complaints and grievances are resolved quickly and fairly. The vast majority of concerns are dealt with immediately and satisfactorily at an informal stage. However, the school recognises that there may be occasions when a formal complaint will be pursued. Therefore, this document sets out to provide an efficient and accessible complaints procedure with clear channels of communication.

## 2. Aims

- To resolve concerns through informal discussion at the earliest stage
- To ensure that complainants are confident that their concerns will be dealt with quickly and effectively
- To have clearly defined timescales and contact via the School Business Manager (SBM)
- To focus on a resolution
- To provide a fair and transparent investigative process for the school and the complainant.

## 3. Principles

- The Complaints Policy and Procedure will be published on the school website
- All staff and Governors will be familiar with the procedure
- The procedure will be followed sequentially
- Complaints that relate to school issues will not normally be considered outside the school until the full internal school procedure has been exhausted.
- A Governors Complaints Panel will be agreed at the beginning of each year
- The Headteacher is responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school and for advising on and implementing the Governors policies. The Headteacher is solely responsible for making day-to-day decisions
- An individual Governor will not respond to or investigate a complaint unless designated to do so by the Chair of Governors.

## 4. 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 to Sydenham School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to suspensions and permanent exclusions or admissions), we will use this Complaints Procedure.

## 5. 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.

Sydenham School 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 designated senior member of staff responsible for complaints) will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, (The designated senior member of staff responsible for complaints) 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.

## **6. 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 on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with the Headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Any member of staff with whom a complaint or concern has been raised will pass this directly on to the Headteacher and the Deputy Headteacher within 1 day of receipt. This complaint should not be shared with any other member of staff. The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will communicate appropriately with this member of staff.

Complainants should not approach individual Governors to raise concerns or complaints. Governors 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 the Headteacher via the School Business Manager (SBM). Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to Sarah Armstrong (the Chair of Governors), via the School Business Manager (SBM). 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 via the Headteachers PA. Please mark them 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.

## **7. 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.

## **8. Timescales**

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.

## **9. 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.

## **10. Vexatious Complaints**

There will be occasions when, on proper investigation a complaint is deemed to be unfounded, malicious or vexatious or when despite all stages of the procedure having been followed the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to reopen the same issue. In these circumstances the Chair of the Governing Body will inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is closed.

## **11. Persistent complaints**

### **11.1 Unreasonably persistent complaints**

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure, beyond all reason
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the timeframes it sets out
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

#### **Steps we will take**

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term

- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

### Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

### 11.2 Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and that the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

### 11.3 Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

## 12. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
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<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 the London Borough of Lewisham</p> <p><a href="https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/Complaints-and-feedback/Pages/Complaints-about-schools-.aspx">https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/Complaints-and-feedback/Pages/Complaints-about-schools-.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).</p> <p><a href="https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/socialcare/children/keeping-children-safe/Multi-agency-Safeguarding-Hub/Pages/default.aspx">https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/socialcare/children/keeping-children-safe/Multi-agency-Safeguarding-Hub/Pages/default.aspx</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspensions and permanent exclusions of children from school</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about suspensions and permanent exclusions can be found at:</p> <p><a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-suspensions and permanent exclusions/suspensions and permanent exclusions</a>.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p> <p><a href="http://fluencycontent2-schoolwebsite.netdna-ssl.com/FileCluster/Sydenham/MainFolder/policies-18/Behaviour-Policy-nov-18.pdf">http://fluencycontent2-schoolwebsite.netdna-ssl.com/FileCluster/Sydenham/MainFolder/policies-18/Behaviour-Policy-nov-18.pdf</a></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.</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 directly 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 Local Authority 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.</p>
<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>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Curriculum - content</li> </ul>	Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a> record t

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 Sydenham 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.

### 13. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Sydenham 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.

### 14. Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

### 15. Stage 1

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

The School Business Manager (SBM) will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 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.*

*Note: If the school does not receive a response from you to the request for this additional clarification or a meeting within 10 school days, we will assume that you no longer wish to pursue the complaint, and the complaint will be closed.*

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 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, under exceptional circumstances, 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 Sydenham 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 to the Governors, 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.

## **16. 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 three 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 Business Manager (SBM), within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The School Business Manager (SBM) will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

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

The School Business Manager (SBM) will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the School Business Manager (SBM) will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the School Business Manager (SBM) 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 Sydenham School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent Governors through another local school or through the 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 workplace 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 the staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. We are not obliged to share the outcomes of a complaint of this type with the complainant.*

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 7 school days before the meeting, the School Business Manager (SBM) will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that 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 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not 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 Sydenham School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 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 Sydenham 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 Sydenham School will take to resolve the complaint. The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

## **17. Next Steps**

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 Sydenham School. They will consider whether Sydenham 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](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.

## **18. Record keeping**

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and record retention schedule.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the governing board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

## **19. Learning lessons**

The governing body will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the headteacher, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

## **20. Monitoring arrangements**

The governing body will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in making sure that complaints are handled properly. The governing body will track the number and nature of complaints and review underlying issues.

The complaints records are logged and managed

This policy will be reviewed by the full governing board every [frequency – the DfE recommends at least once every 2 years.

At each review, the policy will be approved by the full governing body

## **21. Links with other policies**

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Suspension and permanent exclusion policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- SEN policy and information report
- Privacy notices

## 22. Roles and Responsibilities

### 22.1. Complainant

The complainant is asked to:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school 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.

### 22.2. 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, children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
  - considering any relevant records and other relevant information
  - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the Complaints Co-ordinator as appropriate.

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 additional details.

### 22.3. Complaints Co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator is a designated member of the Senior Leadership Team. They should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors, Clerk and Local Authority (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.

#### 22.4. The School Business Manager

The School Business Manager (SBM) is the contact point for the complainant and should:

- 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

For Stage 1 complaints the School Business Manager (SBM) should:

- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the Committee's decision.

#### 22.5. The Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk 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)

For Stage 2 complaints the Clerk should:

- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the Committee's decision.

#### 22.6. Committee Chair

The Committee's Chair, who is nominated in advance of a Stage 2 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).

## 22.7. 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.

- some complainants may 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 is 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 One: Formal Complaint Form – Sydenham School

Please complete and return to [the](#) School Business Manager (SBM) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Student's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the student (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 Two: How to raise a concern or complaint flow chart

