

Complaints Policy and Procedures



Formby High School
Determined to Achieve

Introduction

The prime aim of this School Policy is to resolve a complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

Legislation and Guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in Part 7 of the Schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of students at the School.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on [creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations](#), and refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

This policy complies with the School's Funding Agreement and Articles of Association.

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 Formby High 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 exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

The DfE guidance explains 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 is 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. Formby High School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matters 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 Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Formby High School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints 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 can be raised with either the form tutor, class teacher, the appropriate Middle Leader, the appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Headteacher. If the concern remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should be prepared to give details of the circumstances which have given rise to the complaint, and express how they would like the matter to be dealt with or how they see a resolution being achieved. For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. Should help be required to complete the form, please contact the school office. Complainants can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice for support.

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.

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 3 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the PA to the Headteacher. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the Clerk to Governors. 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 Governors via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

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.

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.

Complaints received outside of term time

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

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Sefton Council.
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our Child Protection and Safeguarding policies and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local Authority's Designated Officer (Tracey Holyhead) on 0151 934 3783 who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) - 0151 934 4013/4481.
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: Behaviour in schools: sanctions and exclusions: Exclusions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) . *complaints about the application of the Behaviour and Rewards Policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus . Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain directly to the Local Authority or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.

Staff conduct	<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>
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 directly.
National Curriculum – content	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at:</p> <p>www.education.gov.uk/contactus</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 Formby High School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving Complaints

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

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the incident 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 wishes to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Managing Complaints

Stage 1 (Informal Complaint)

There may be some occasions where the complaint can be resolved very quickly and informally, but in other cases further enquiries will be needed with accounts taken from the parties involved. The member of staff dealing with the complaint at Stage 1 will make a record of the issues raised and will carry out those enquiries. There is no suggested timescale for resolution at this stage

given the importance of dialogue through informal discussion. However, it would be expected that most issues would be resolved within 15 school days.

Once enquiries have been concluded, the member of staff will contact the Complainant and provide:

- a summary of their understanding of the complaint raised
- a summary of the information which they have discovered as part of their Stage 1 enquiries (if required to be undertaken)
- the School's response to the complaint and an explanation as to how the response has been reached
- confirmation of whether any action is to be taken

The member of staff will keep the Headteacher fully informed about the complaint and the progress of their enquiries.

Complaints about the Headteacher or a member of the Governing Body must be made to the Clerk to Governors, via the school office.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, a suitably skilled Governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

If the complaint is about a member of the Governing Body, the Chair of Governors will complete all the actions at Stage 1.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Governing Body or
- the majority of the Governing Body

then 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 Complaint)

If the Complainant is not satisfied that the matter has been resolved at Stage 1, they can progress their complaint to the formal procedure under Stage 2 (a "Stage 2 Complaint").

Stage 2 Complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the PA to the Headteacher. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within two 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 (who will act as the "Complaints Co-ordinator"), but not the decision to be taken.

Any written and/or evidentiary material must be provided by the complainant to the school in advance of the investigation. The school will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

During the investigation, the Headteacher (or Complaints Co-ordinator) 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 the investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within fifteen school days of the date of receipt of the Stage 2 Complaint.

If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, he/she 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 Formby High School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

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 2.

Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the Governing Body must be made to the Clerk to 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

then Stage 2 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 3 (Panel Hearing)

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, he/she can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a meeting with members of the Governing Body's Complaints Panel, which will be comprised of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, with at least one panel member who is independent of the management and oversight of the school. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

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

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within two 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 him/her of the date of the meeting. He/she will aim to convene a meeting within fifteen 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 Panel will consist of at least three people, including Governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint and at least one member who is wholly independent of the management and running of the school.

Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Panel. If there are fewer than three Governors from Formby High School available with no prior knowledge of the complaint, the Clerk will source any additional, independent Governors through another local school or through the Local Authority's Governor Services team, in order to make up the panel. Alternatively, an entirely independent panel may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 3.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Governing Body or
- the majority of the Governing Body

then Stage 3 will be heard by a panel of independent Governors. This Panel will be comprised of independent Governors secured from another local school or through the Local Authority's Governor Services team.

The Complainant 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 panel 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, he/she 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 ten 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 Panel at least seven school days before the meeting

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

The Panel 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 Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The Panel 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 Panel 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 Panel will communicate the decision of the Panel to the complainant and Formby High School within three school days of the meeting. This will be provided in writing.

The letter 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 Formby High School will take to resolve the complaint.

The letter to the complainant will also include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Formby High School.

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, he/she can contact the ESFA after they have completed Stage 2.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Formby High School. They will consider whether Formby High School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

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

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
5 Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Any complaint considered serial or unreasonable will be handled in accordance with procedures set out in Appendix 2. Examples of serial and unreasonable complaints are contained within Appendix 2.

Complaint Campaigns

If the school becomes the focus of a campaign, receiving large volumes of complaints all based on the same subject and from complainants unconnected with the school, the school will respond by sending a template response to all complainants or publishing a single response on the school's website. If complainants are dissatisfied with this response, they may contact the Department for Education (details above).

When We Will Stop Responding to a Complaint

The decision to stop responding will not be taken lightly and will only happen when:

- We have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case to stop responding may be strengthened if:

- The complainants' letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive
- The complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- The school has reason to believe the individual is making contact with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

Learning Lessons

The Governing Body will review any underlying issues raised by formal complaints with the Headteacher/Senior Leadership Team 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 occurrences in the future.

Data Protection

The management, recording and retention of the complaint will be handled in compliance with the school's Data Protection Policy. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complainants are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Monitoring Arrangements

The Governing Body will monitor the effectiveness of the Complaints Procedure to ensure that complaints are handled properly. They will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated above.

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher and Governing Body every three years. At each review, the policy will be approved by Governors.

Appendix 1**Formby High School Complaint Form**

Please complete fully and return to either the Headteacher or Clerk to Governors who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	
Student's name (if relevant):	
Your relationship to the student (if relevant):	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Daytime telephone:	
Evening telephone:	
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.	

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

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
I confirm that the details above may be shared with those involved in investigating and handling the complaint.	<input type="checkbox"/> I agree <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to discuss data sharing prior to confirming
Signature:	
Date:	
Official use	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By who:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	

Please use continuation sheet if necessary.

Appendix 2

Procedure for Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

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

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

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

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

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

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Formby High School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of

communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

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 Formby High School.

Appendix 3

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 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 panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The headteacher or complaints panel will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator

(this could be the 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 Governors, Chair of Trust or the Clerk and 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.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the panel and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the UK Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the UK 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 panel's decision.

Panel Chair

The panel'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 panel is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
- If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted

- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Panel Member

Panel members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
- No governor / trustee may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant
- We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
- Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The panel should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the panel should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the panel should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.