Complaints Policy and Procedures

North Halifax Grammar School

Approved by:	Full Governance Board
Owner	Executive Assistant to the Headteacher
Last reviewed on:	Autumn Term 2026
Next review due by:	Autumn Term 2029

Definitions and Aims

Definitions

The Department for Education (DfE) guidance explains the different 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”

In most cases, a concern can be resolved through informal means. A complaint will follow formal procedures.

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to North Halifax Grammar School (NHGS) about any provision of facilities or services that are provided. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions – see the table on page 3), we will use this complaints policy.

Aims

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents and carers of students at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect confidentiality, where necessary
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures, as set out in this policy, will be followed.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedures in full.

To support this, we will make sure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

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 policy to deal with complaints from parents/carers of student

It is also based on best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE).

This policy complies with our 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 North Halifax Grammar School (NHGS) 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, permanent exclusions or admissions), the school will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

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

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

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. NHGS 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 Co-ordinator, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Complaints Co-ordinator 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, NHGS 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 on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

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

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of the Governance Board, via the Governance Professional to the Board. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of the Governance Board, or any individual Trustee or the whole Governance Board should be addressed to the Governance Professional at the school. 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 Complaints Co-ordinator. You can also ask a third-party organisation for example 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.

Anonymous complaints

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

Time scales

You must raise the complaint **within three months** of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved, however, this would be on a case-by-case basis.

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 this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against NHGS in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Principles for Investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

Use of AI

To ensure complaints are addressed as efficiently as possible, we kindly ask that parents write their complaints rather than using AI to do this. AI generated messages often add unnecessary complexity and length, which can make it time consuming and onerous to identify the core issue(s).

If it is determined that AI has been used in the submission of a complaint, the time scales set out within this policy may be extended. Complainants will be informed of the revised time scale in which to expect a response where such communications are received.

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.

If at any point the school cannot meet the timescales set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new time scales and explain the delay

Scope of this complaints procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the Local Authority.
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.

	If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local Authority Designated Co-ordinator (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Team (MAST). MAST@calderdale.gov.uk 01422 393336
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.*
• 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 whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Such providers should have their own complaints procedures to deal with complaints about their services. Please contact them direct.
• National Curriculum Content	Please contact the curriculum providers – see the school website under Curriculum for details.

Managing serial and unreasonable complaints

NHGS 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.

NHGS 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 the Governance Board 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 NHGS 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 NHGS.

Vexatious complaints

Occasionally, we may receive a complaint we consider to be vexatious. We define 'vexatious' complaints as:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value

We will not refuse to accept further correspondence or complaints from an individual we have had repeat or excessive contact with. The application of a 'serial or persistent' marking will be against the subject or complaint itself rather than the complainant. However, we will stop responding to the complainant if:

- 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 us repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time
- their letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive
- they make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- we have reason to believe the individual is contacting us with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

We will not stop responding just because an individual is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions.

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, we 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 our handling of the situation, they can contact the DfE – see page 11 of this document.

Resolving complaints

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

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

Withdrawal of a complaint

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

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis and the school will make every effort to do this.

Concerns should be raised with either the relevant member of staff, for example, class teacher, Head of Department (subject head), Year Group Leader, Assistant Headteacher, or Headteacher by email, letter or telephone from a teacher. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should telephone main reception or email them: mail@nhgs.co.uk . The complainant should also state what they feel might resolve the concern. If the complainant **Complainants should not approach individual trustees or the Headteacher in the first instance 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.

The school will acknowledge informal complaints within **5 school days**. If a complaint is received in a school holiday or over a weekend, bank holiday, or staff training day (any non-school days), the first day the school is back in session will be the date on which the complaint is received. The acknowledgement will confirm how the school intends to proceed, including and indication of the anticipated timescale.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response **within 15 school days** of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint **within 5 school days** of receipt of the response of the Stage 1 Informal Complaint.

Stage 2 – Formal complaints

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the Complaints Co-ordinator (complaints@nhgs.co.uk). This may be done in person or in writing (preferably using the Complaint Form in Appendix A in this policy). Complainants may also raise a formal complaint over the phone or in person or through a third party acting on their behalf, if they have the complainant's consent to do so.

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint. If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school's Office Manager at admin@nhgs.co.uk.

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (by letter sent by 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 strategic leadership group but not the decision to be taken.

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

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

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 Governance Board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled Trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the Governance Board must be made to the Governance Professional, via the school.

Conclusion

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant **within 10 school days** of the date of the acknowledgement of the complaint.

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

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

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this policy, they should inform the Governance Professional (clerk@nhgs.co.uk) to the Governance Board, in writing **within 5 school days** of receipt of the response to the Stage 2 complaint.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing.

Submitting a Stage 3 Complaint

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Governance Professional, via the school, **within 5 school days** of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

The Governance Professional 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**.

A Stage 3 complaint can also be considered in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint within the time frame and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved, however, this would be on a case-by-case basis.

The Governance Professional 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 3 request. If this is not possible, the Governance Professional will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complaint is about any of the following, then the Stage 3 complaint will be heard by Members and an independent panel member

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Governance Board or
- the majority of the Governance Board

Convening the panel

A Hearing Panel will be appointed by, or on behalf of, the school and will consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, two of these being Trustees. At least 1 panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school.

The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress.

The complainant will be given reasonable notice of the date of the panel hearing. The Governance Professional will aim to find a date **within 15 school days** of the request, where possible.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the Governance Professional will set a date. The Hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties.

This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

At the Hearing

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.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

The Hearing may be recorded by the Governance Professional who is minuting the Hearing, but this is deleted once the minutes have been completed and is not for complainant or other public consumption.

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

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

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under (Human Resources) staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

At least 10 school days before the meeting, the Governance Professional will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 10 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 normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

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

The 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.

At the Hearing, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave, and the evidence will then be considered.

The Outcome

The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the Hearing. The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the proprietor and headteacher. This will be provided **within 5 school days** of the date of the Hearing by the Chair of the Hearing Panel.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education (DfE) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by NHGS.

A record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will 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.

Complaints against the Headteacher, a Trustee or the Governance Board

Complaints can be raised by letter, email, over the phone or in person. A third party acting on behalf of the complainant can raise a complaint (if they have the complainant's written permission to do so).

Complaints against the Headteacher

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the Governance Professional to the governance board, (clerk@nhgs.co.uk) marked as private and confidential.

A suitably skilled and impartial Trustee will then carry out the steps at Stage 1.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, the complainant can escalate it to a formal complaint (Stage 2).

A suitably skilled member of the governance board (usually the Chair of Governors) will then carry out the steps of Stage 2.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they can escalate the complaint further, as set out in Stage 3.

The complaint will then be considered by a complaints panel, as set out in Stage 3 above.

Complaints against individual trustees

Complaints against individual trustees should be made to the Governance Professional to the governance board (clerk@nhgs.co.uk) marked as private and confidential.

The Governance Professional will arrange for the chair of the governance board to hear the complaint.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, the complainant can escalate it to a formal complaint (Stage 2). The chair of trustees will carry out the steps of Stage 2 set out above.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they can escalate the complaint as set out in Stage 3 above.

The complaint will then be considered by a complaints panel, as set out in Stage 3 above.

Complaints against the chair, the entire governance board or majority of the governance board or complaints involving both the chair and vice chair

Complaints against individual trustees should be made to the Governance Professional to the governance board (clerk@nhgs.co.uk) marked as private and confidential.

The Governance Professional will then determine the most appropriate course of action, which will depend on the nature of the complaint.

For example, this may involve:

- Having the complaint heard by a suitably skilled trustee, in cases of complaints against the chair
- Sourcing an independent investigator to complete Stage 2
- Stage 3 being carried out by a completely independent complaints panel

Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedures

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school or trust complaints procedures, they can refer their complaint to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly. The DfE will not overturn the school or trust's decision about a complaint but will intervene if a school or trust has:

- Breached a clause in its funding agreement

- Failed to act in line with its duties under education law
- Acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising its functions

If the complaints policy is found not to meet regulations, the trust will be asked to correct its procedures accordingly.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage on GOV.UK for how to complain about a school.

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

Record keeping and confidentiality

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
- 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 stored securely, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or the panel hearing.

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 2018 and UK GDPR, or where the material must be made available to Ofsted.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law and our privacy notices and records management policy

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a panel hearing needs to be organised at a later point. The exception to this is when a complaint is made against the whole governing board and they need to be aware of the allegations in order to respond.

Where the governing board is aware of the substance of a complaint (that is not about the board) before the panel hearing 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 governance board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

Learning lessons

The complaints panel will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with 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.

Monitoring arrangements

The governance board will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedures in making sure that complaints are handled properly. The governance board will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the Executive Assistant to the Headteacher.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

At each review, the policy will be approved by the full governance board.

Links with other policies

- Child protection policy (public)

- Safeguarding policy and procedures (public)
- Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions policy (public)
- Staff grievance procedures (internal)
- Staff disciplinary procedures (internal)
- SEND policy and information reports (public)

Appendix A - Complaint Form

Your name:	
Student's name:	
Your relationship to the student	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
Please give details of your complaint:	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
Signature:	
Date:	

Please complete and return to the Complaints Co-ordinator, or Governance Professional (see Appendix C) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Official use	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By whom:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	

Appendix B: Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective and timely 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 or in parent WhatsApp group chats
- respect confidentiality
- do not approach individual Trustees about the complaint

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

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- The Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher
- The designated complaints Trustee
- Any other member of staff providing administrative support

The complaints co-ordinator will:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, Headteacher, Chair of the Governance Board, Chair of Members or the Governance Professional 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.

Governance Professional to the Governance Board / Trust Board

The Governance Professional 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.

Committee Panel Chair

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

- both parties are asked (via the Governance Professional) 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
- minutes are taken of the meeting
- they liaise with the Governance Professional (and complaints Co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so

  No trustee / trustee 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.

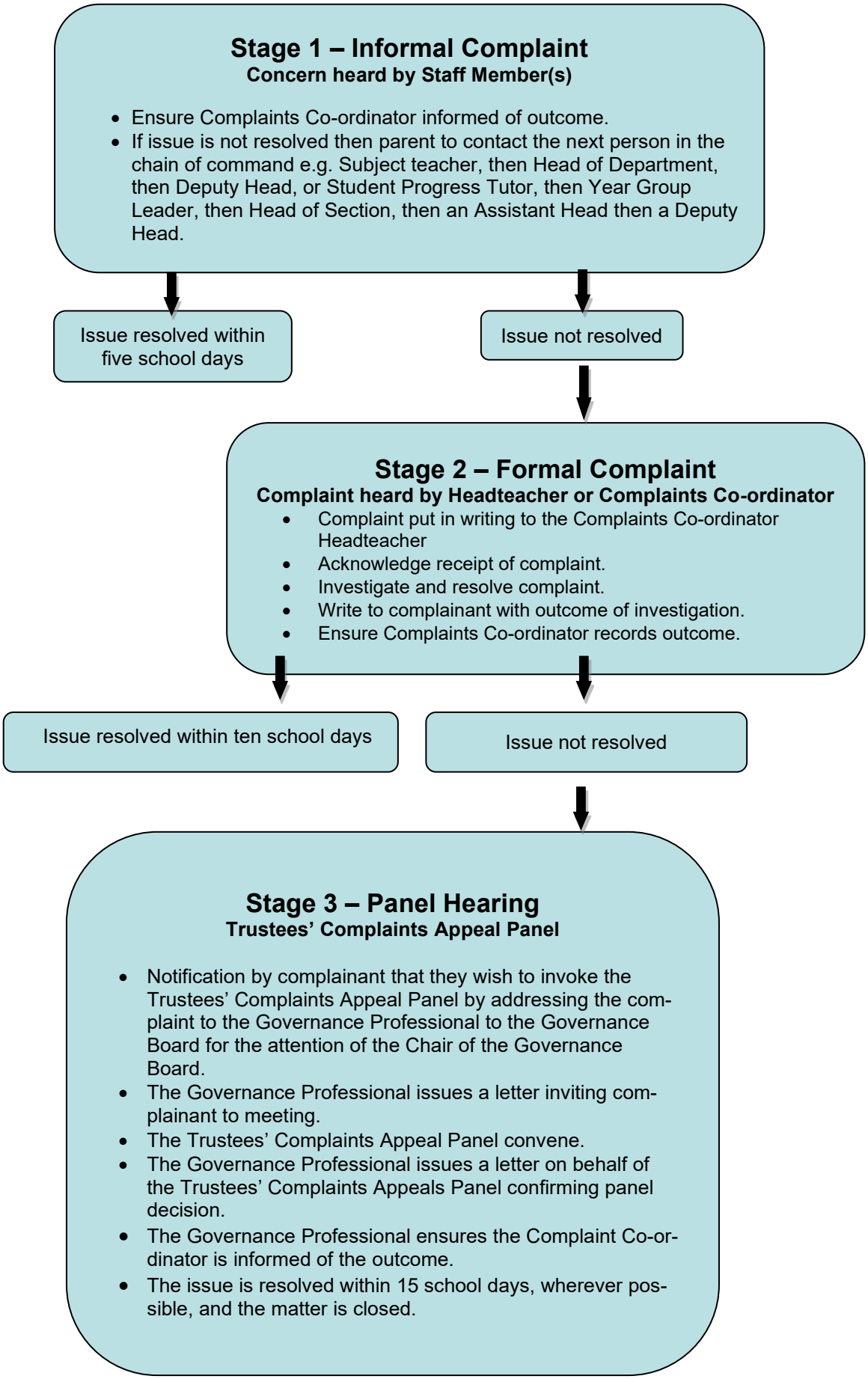
  The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

  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 C – Flowchart



Appendix D – Complaints Panel Hearing Schedule

The Trustees' Complaints Appeal Panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible;
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence;
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses;
- The Headteacher and Complaints Appeal Panel may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken;
- The Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses;
- The complainant and the Complaints Appeal Panel may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken;
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint;
- The Headteacher is then invited to respond to set out the school's actions and the response to the initial complaint
- The complainant will be entitled to a final reply
- The Chair of the Complaints Panel will explain that both parties will hear from the panel within 5 school days.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issue;
- The Governance Professional will stay to assist the panel with its decision making.

Appendix D – Personnel

Complaints Co-ordinator	Email: complaints@nhgs.co.uk
Headteacher	Miss A L Kent headsea@nhgs.co.ukp
Governance Professional to the Governance Board	Mrs Wright clerk@nhgs.co.uk Mrs Wright Governance Professional to the Board North Halifax Grammar School Moorbottom Road Illingworth Halifax HX2 9SU Tel: 01422 244625