



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Owner:	Headteacher
Date Ratified:	15 th July 2026
Ratified by:	Full Governing Body
Date Policy to be reviewed:	September 2028



Complaints Policy and Procedure

The aim of Claycots School is to be a high achieving school at the heart of the community where children and staff learn effectively and everyone is valued as an individual, treated fairly and with respect. This involves providing access and opportunities for all pupils without discrimination of any kind.

We aim to embed our school values in all that we do at Claycots. This policy has been written with these values in mind:

- Integrity
- Kindness
- Respect
- Curiosity

1. Aims and Purpose of the policy

Claycots aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to concerns and complaints from parents of pupils at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Ensure 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

Claycots believe in creating a strong partnership between home and school and we try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible.

The Governors take the well-being of school staff seriously and will ensure that there is pastoral care and support to staff as needed through all stages of the complaint process.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the [Education Act 2002](#), which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

It is also based on [guidance for schools on complaints procedures](#) from the DfE, including the model procedures for complaints and for managing serial and unreasonable complaints.



In addition, it addresses duties set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#) with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements.

3. Definitions and Scope

Definitions

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”. The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.
- A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”.

Scope

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline
- School re-organisation proposals
- Curriculum
- Collective worship

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

Complaints about the school's delivery of the National Curriculum are within the scope of this policy, but complaints about the content of the National Curriculum should be sent to [the DfE](#).

4. Timescales

The school acknowledges that sometimes things do go wrong for all kinds of reasons and we encourage people wishing to raise a concern to do so as soon as possible to enable the school to address matters quickly and to act where needed to put things right. The school will not normally consider concerns or complaints which relate to incidents or matters that are over 3 months old. This is because it is not always possible to thoroughly and fairly investigate historic matters.



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 we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

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

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 policy or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action in relation to their complaint, we ask that the school is informed at the earliest possible opportunity. In these cases, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have been concluded.

5. Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school will keep a record of the complaint (see section 10) and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that the school is not meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by calling 0300 123 4666, or by emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. An online contact form is also available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>.

We will notify parents and carers if we become aware that the school is to be inspected by Ofsted. We will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis

6. Informal Stages: Initial Contact and Senior Leader Review

Initial Contact

Most concerns are easily resolved and can be dealt with through a conversation where dissatisfaction is expressed and the school has an opportunity to acknowledge this, address it and put things right. This process is referred to as raising a concern, expressing dissatisfaction or making an informal complaint.

The complainant should start by sharing their concern with the Class Teacher. In a large school like Claycots, this is usually the best and quickest way of resolving issues. In some cases, the Class Teacher may feel it more appropriate to refer the concern to the Year Leader. If the person raising the concern is unsure of who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the school office on enquiries@claycots.com or by calling 01753 521215 (Britwell) or 01753 531415 (Town Hall).



An initial meeting or telephone call will be made to establish the nature of the concern and to seek a resolution to the problem. The staff member may need to talk to others before they can respond in full. The timescale for a response is within 5 working days.

The response will involve communicating any actions or monitoring of the situation that have been agreed, putting this in writing if this seems to be the best way of making this clear.

Senior Leader Review

If the person raising the concern is not satisfied with the outcome of the initial contact, then it may be escalated to a Senior Leader at this stage who will review the actions taken, complete any further investigation and seek to resolve the issue at the informal stage. The timescale for a response from a Senior Leader is within 5 working days.

If, following this escalation, the matter cannot be resolved the complainant will be advised of the formal complaint process, and they can complete a complaint form detailing their complaint and any outcome that they are seeking to resolve the matter.

Informal complaints made against the Headteacher, or any member of the governing board should be directed to the clerk to the governing board in the first instance.

If the complaint is about the headteacher or a member of the governing board (including the chair or vice-chair), a suitably skilled and impartial governor will carry out the above.

7. Formal Process Stage 1: Referral to the Headteacher

All formal complaints must be made in writing using the Complaint Form (see Appendix 1). The complaint form must be completed online and must include details of the complaint and set out what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. Formal complaints must be of reasonable length and not exceed the word limit set out in the complaints form.

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. The Headteacher will usually delegate the investigation of formal complaints to a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The Headteacher or the delegated Senior Leader 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.

The Senior Leader will gather any additional information needed from the complainant. They can consider whether a face-to-face meeting or a telephone call is the most appropriate way of doing this. The Senior Leader will ascertain whether the complainant has exhausted the informal procedures first and may, where appropriate refer the complainant to the informal procedure to ensure that where possible the resolution requested can be resolved without needing to proceed further with the formal stage. Once the nature of the complaint has been established, the Senior Leader will decide whether a formal investigation is the most appropriate action.

During the investigation, the investigator will:

- If necessary, interview those involved in the matter
- Review any relevant records
- Consider any relevant policies or procedures
- Keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.



Once the investigation is complete it is passed to the Headteacher for review. The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision on the outcome or any action to be taken.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Headteacher will provide a written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the Headteacher 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 Claycots Primary 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.

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

8. Formal Process Stage 2: Referral to Chair of Governors

If the matter is not resolved at Stage 1 or it is about the Headteacher or a member of the Governing Body, it will be referred to the Chair of Governors for review. The complainant should contact the Chair of Governors using the governor email address governors@claycots.com or enquiries@claycots.com.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the request for review and arrange to speak with the complainant either in person or on the telephone within 5 school days. The aim of this is to discuss why the complainant is unhappy with the Stage 1 response and what further resolution they are seeking.

The Chair of Governors, at their discretion, may wish to undertake some further investigation before providing the complainant with a further written response within 15 school days. This response will advise them that if they remain unhappy with the way that the school has responded to their complaint so far, they can request that it is escalated to Stage 3.

9. Formal Process Stage 3: Review by a Governing Body Complaint Panel

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 1 and 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to stage 3 – a meeting with members of the Governing Body's Complaints Committee. This is the final stage of the Complaints Procedure.

A request to escalate to stage 3 must be made to the Clerk of Governors, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the stage 2 response. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The request must set out what the complainant wishes the Governor Panel to review and what further outcome they are seeking from the panel.



The Clerk 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.

The Clerk 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 Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The Complaints Committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide among themselves who will act as the chair of the complaints committee. If there are fewer than three Governors from Claycots Primary School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their local authority's governor services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at stage 3.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making its decision it will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend.

At least 5 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 5 school days before the meeting.

A panel information pack should be compiled containing the details of the complaint, initial responses and any additional information/evidence provided by both parties. Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days before the date of the meeting. No additional written documentation will be accepted by the panel on the day. 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 2 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not 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 aim of the panel hearing is to consider the complaint, look at how the school has dealt with the complaint, try to resolve matters if this is possible and try to achieve a reconciliation between the complainant and the school. It must be recognised however, that sometimes it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complaint that their complaint has at least been taken seriously.



If the complainant has been invited and fails to attend the hearing without good reason the complaint will have been deemed to have been withdrawn.

The Committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and will have the opportunity to ask any additional questions.

The panel will consider all the evidence presented and will reach a unanimous or majority decision on the complaint.

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 Claycots Primary 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 DfE if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Claycots Primary 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 3 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

Following the Stage 3 Panel Hearing, the school will consider the complaint to be closed.

10. Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the DfE.

The DfE will not re-investigate the matter of the complaint. It will look at whether the school's complaints policy and any other relevant statutory policies that the school holds were adhered to. The DfE also looks at whether the school's statutory policies adhere to education legislation.

The DfE will intervene where a school has:

- 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 procedure is found to not meet regulations, the school will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

The school will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

11. Unreasonable Complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. The school will not respond to intemperate or unreasonable communication whether verbal or written and will only engage once this is acceptable, this will include returning letters or emails. It is at the discretion of the school what is deemed to be unreasonable, but examples might include:

- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insisting they are fully answered, often immediately and to timescales not compatible with the complaints policy
- Sending lengthy and over complicated communication. In these cases, the school will request that complaints are simplified to the word limit set out in the complaints form
- Publishing unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

Similarly, a complaint may become unreasonable if the complainant:

- Refuses to articulate a complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint procedure or with good practice
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- Changes the basis of a complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Repeatedly making the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- 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
- 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
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome

Please note: the above list is not intended to be exhaustive and is for guidance purposes only. It is at the discretion of the school what is deemed to be unreasonable.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school 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.

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.



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, refer them to this policy and remind them to act in accordance with it.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a way that we believe is intended to cause disruption or inconvenience, 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
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

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 school premises and ensuring appropriate measures of support are provided to staff where they are the subject of aggression and/or violence.

12. Serial/Persistent Complaints

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent'. We may stop responding to the complainant when the following conditions are met:

- 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 the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

When we decide to stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will consider any new complaints they make provided the concerns raised are materially different to those raised previously and/or are unconnected to the previous concern

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 ESFA if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

13. Complaint Campaigns



If we receive what we consider to be a large volume of complaints, all based on the same subject and possibly from complainants not connected to the school, then we will treat these complaints as being part of a campaign and respond in one of the following two ways, depending upon the nature and scale of the complaint:

- send the same response to all complainants; or
- publish a single response on the school's website.

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

14. Record keeping

The school will record the progress of all formal 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 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.

15. Learning lessons

The governor complaints panel 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.

16. Monitoring arrangements

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

This policy will be reviewed by the headteacher at least every 3 years.

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



Appendix 1

Complaint Form

Please complete the complaint form online. This can be accessed via the school website and using this link:

[Claycots School: Complaints Form – Fill in form](#)

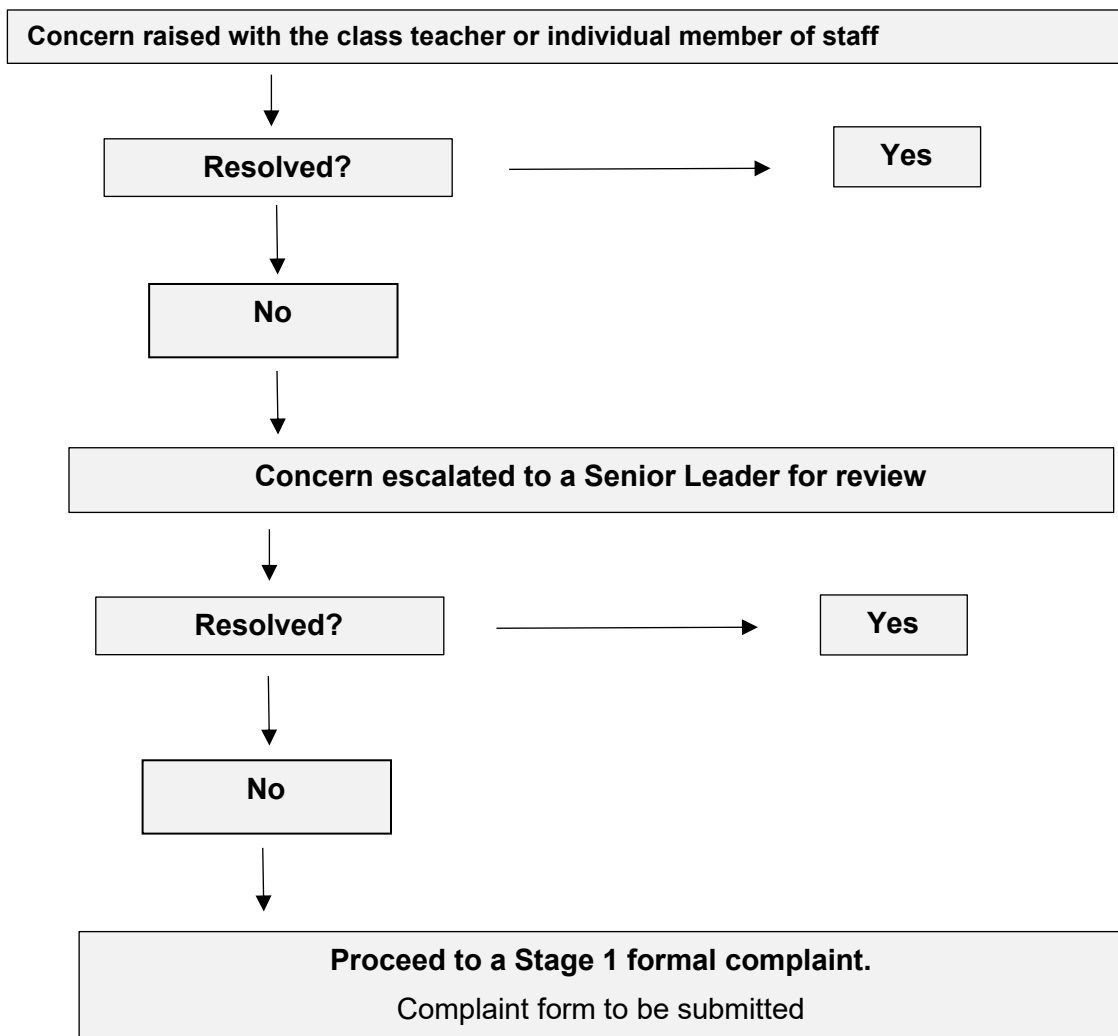
Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address:
Daytime telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it (<i>word limit 4000 characters</i>)
What actions do you feel would resolve the problem at this stage?

Appendix 2

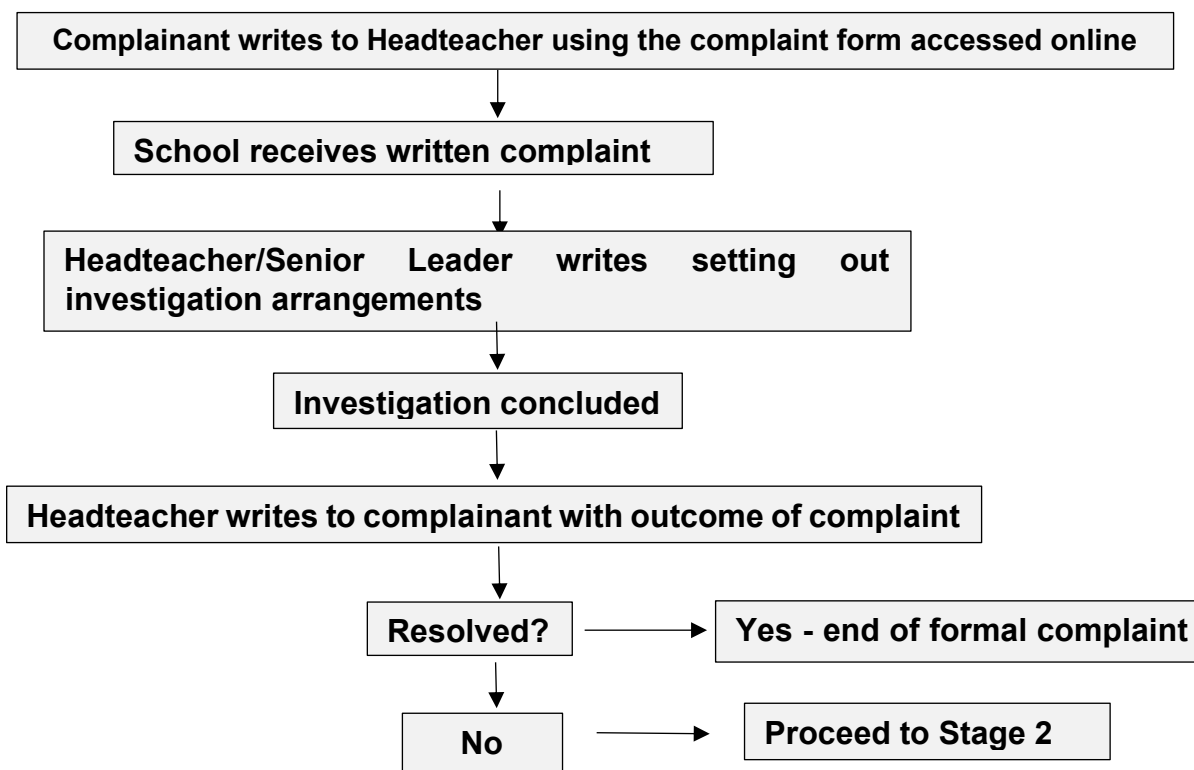
Complaints' Procedure Flow Chart for Parents and Staff

Informal Stage – Initial Contact & Senior Leader Review

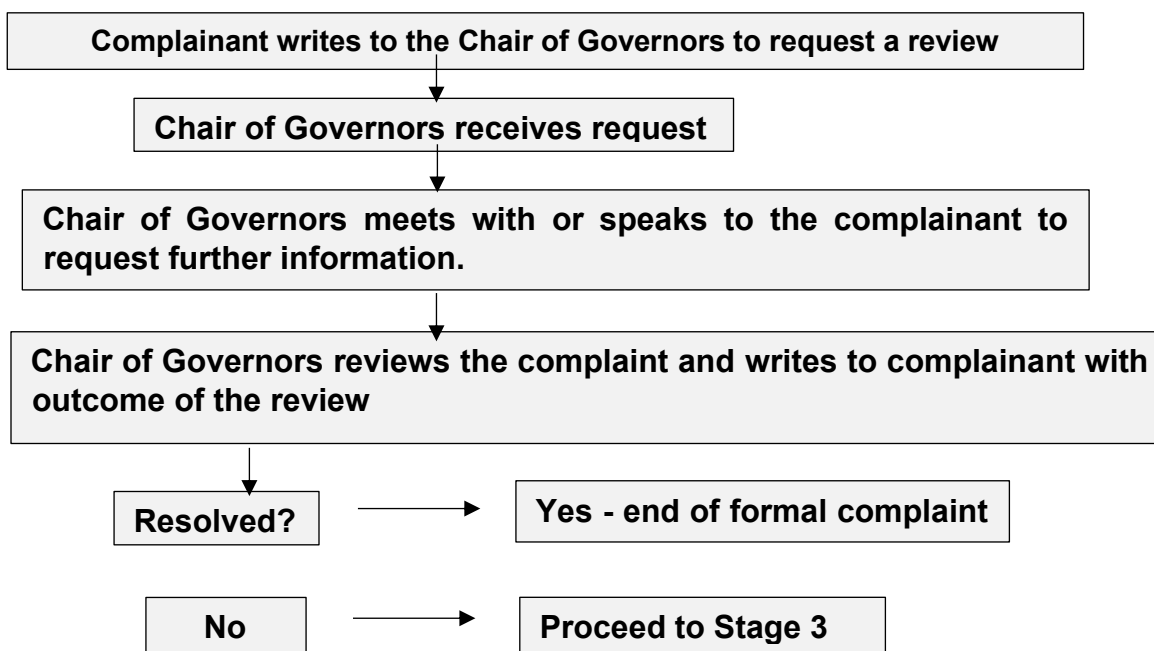
The expectation for all parents is to start here.



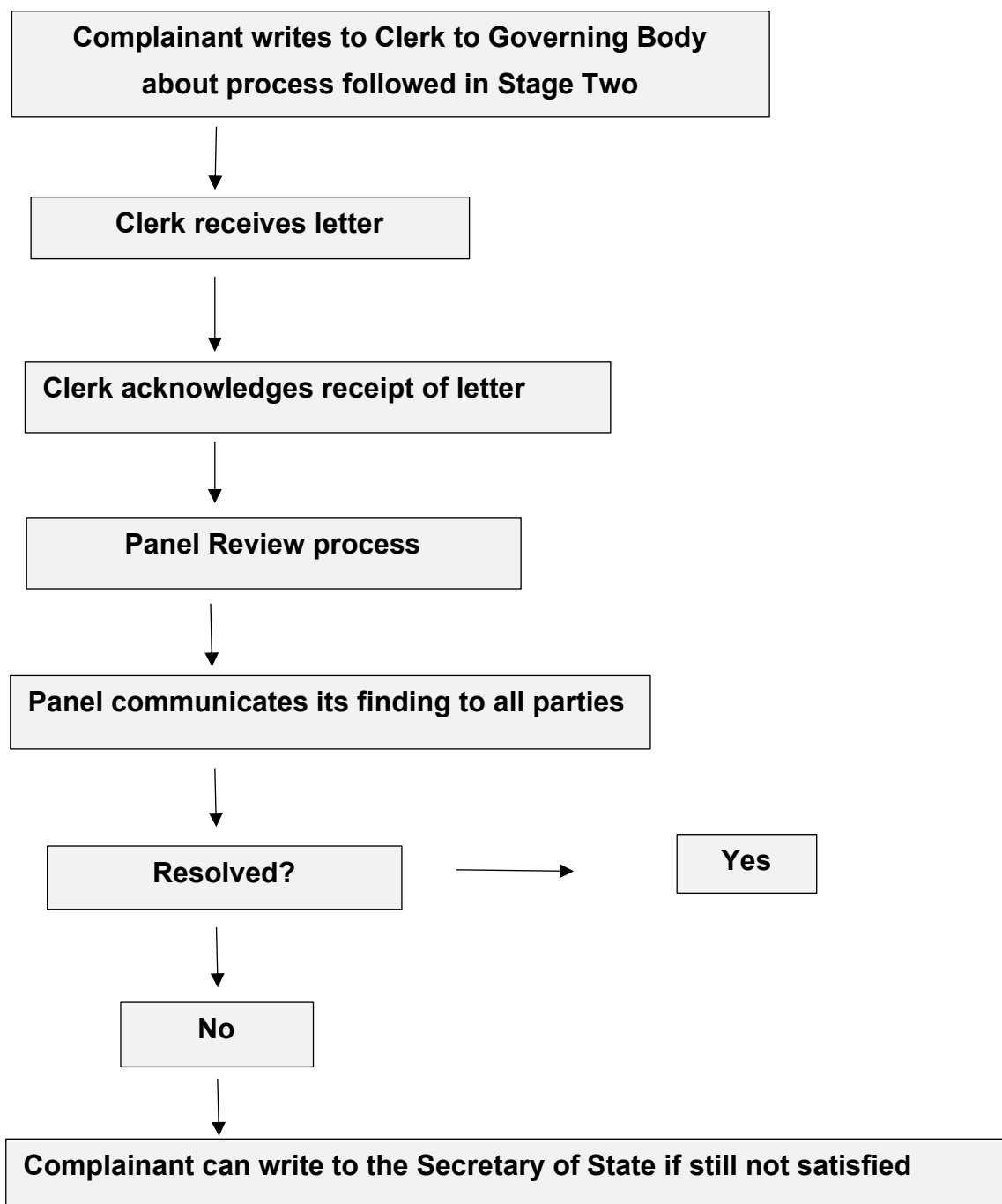
Stage One – Formal Stage



Stage Two – Formal Stage



Stage Three - Governors Review Panel



Note: If the complaint is about the actions of the Headteacher then the Chair of Governors carries out the Headteacher's roles as indicated above or in the flow chart diagram.