

Compliments and Complaints Procedure

Compliments and Complaints Procedure			
Current Status:	Operational – Awaiting Approval	Last Review:	March 2024
Responsibility for Review:	CPO	Next Review:	March 2025
Roles Responsible for Review:	Group Director of Compliance and GDPR	Originated:	March 2024
Approved by:	SET Curriculum	Committee:	Educational Excellence Committee
Type of Policy:	Staff / External	Quality Assured by:	

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. This policy applies to all staff and any other personnel associated with Eastern Education Group (EEG) (including West Suffolk College, Abbeygate Sixth Form College, and One Sixth Form College).
- 1.2. Complaints may arise from students, parents and guardians, customers/clients, businesses, neighbours and organisations local to EEG.
- 1.3. In this context, complaints are deemed to include an expression of dissatisfaction, grievance or fault finding about EEG colleges.
- 1.4. All issues are logged, whether dealt with as a formal or informal complaint, to ensure fairness, to enable EEG colleges to respond quickly to the situation, and to support EEG colleges to change our policies and procedures where this may be deemed appropriate.

2. Application and Scope

- 2.1. EEG colleges will thoroughly investigate any complaint, whether informal or formal, relating to the day-to-day operation of EEG colleges and the standards of service we provide.
- 2.2. This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of students that are registered at each college. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Eastern Education Group about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.
- 2.3. This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by EEG, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

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Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions	Concerns about admissions are handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process (EEG Admissions policy) or for High Needs students 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 officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
Exclusion of children from college*	Exclusions are handled through a separate process (for students at West Suffolk College via the Student Disciplinary Procedure and for students at Abbeygate Sixth Form College or One Sixth Form College via the Student Disciplinary and Appeals Policy). Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions . Appeals and/or concerns about the application of the Student Behaviour policy are covered within those policies.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff conduct are handled in accordance with staff disciplinary procedures, as appropriate. Complainants will <u>not</u> 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.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff are handled in accordance with staff grievance procedures.
Whistleblowing	Staff, including temporary staff and contractors, wishing to complain should first raise concerns via their Line Managers and/or HR, before consulting the whistleblowing policy . 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 .

- 2.4. The timeframes referred to in this policy are our indicative timeframes and EEG will seek to adhere to these timeframes where possible.
- 2.5. If other bodies are involved in investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure may be impacted. This could include the suspension of our internal complaints investigation until the other bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of the indicative timescale.
- 2.6. If a complainant commences legal action against any of the legal institutions within EEG in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the investigation of the complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

3. Key Principles

- 3.1. EEG expects all complainants to make reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution.
- 3.2. To investigate your complaint properly and fairly, we have implemented a staged approach.

Stage 1	Informal Complaint
Stage 2	Formal Complaint
Stage 3	Appeal via Panel Hearing

- 3.3. We expect our members of staff to be addressed in a respectful manner and for communication to remain calm at all times.
- 3.4. The procedures under [Unreasonably Persistent Complaints and Unreasonable Complaint Behaviour](#) will only be used on very rare occasions.
- 3.5. Concerns or complaints should be brought to our attention as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than 3 months after the incident (or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within 3 months of the last of these incidents) will not be considered unless the CEO accepts the complaint is about a particularly serious matter.
- 3.6. On rare occasions there may be complaints from a number of stakeholders relating to the same issue. In order to deal with these complaints efficiently EEG will follow the procedure set out in Part 8.
- 3.7. Complainants should not approach individual Governance members to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints at later stages.

4. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

- 4.1. A concern or complaint can be made in writing to:

<i>FAO Complaints team</i> Abbeygate Sixth Form College Beetons Way Bury St Edmunds Suffolk, IP33 3YU	ASFC-Compliments-and-complaints@easterneducationgroup.ac.uk
<i>FAO Complaints team</i> One Sixth Form College Scrivener Drive Ipswich Suffolk, IP8 3SU	One-Compliments-and-complaints@easterneducationgroup.ac.uk
<i>FAO Complaints team</i> West Suffolk College Out Risbygate Bury St Edmunds Suffolk, IP33 3RL	WSC-Compliments-and-complaints@easterneducationgroup.ac.uk

Please mark as Private and Confidential.

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- 4.2. Third party acting on behalf on a complainant is permitted, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.
- 4.3. Complaints against staff should be made
- 4.4. Complaints that involve or are about the *Principal* should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and sent via the CEO's Executive Assistant – Rebekah.milnthorpe@easterneducationgroup.ac.uk or posted to the addresses above marked for the CEO. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
- 4.5. Complaints about the *CEO* should be addressed to the Chair and sent via the Governance Professional - Suzannah.gales@easterneducationgroup.ac.uk or posted to:

FAO Governance Professional West Suffolk College Out Risbygate Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP33 3RL	FAO Governance Professional Suffolk Academies Trust Out Risbygate Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP33 3RL
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Please mark as Private and Confidential.

- 4.6. Complaints about any *individual Governance member, Committee or of the governing boards* (the Corporation of West Suffolk College or the Trust Board of Suffolk Academies Trust) should be addressed to the Governance Professional (as above). Please mark as Private and Confidential.
- 4.7. A template complaint form is appended at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the college or a third-party organisation, for example the Citizens Advice.
- 4.8. In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance: providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.
- 4.9. We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, in exceptional circumstances and the nature of the complaint contains serious safeguarding allegations the CEO or Chair, as appropriate, may determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

5. Resolving complaints

- 5.1.1. At each stage in the procedure, we seek to resolve the complaint and we implore all complainants to make reasonable attempts to seek informal resolution. To investigate your complaint properly and fairly, we have implemented a staged approach.
- 5.1.2. 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;

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- 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;
- Where appropriate, 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 our policies and procedures in light of the complaint;
- An apology.

5.2. **Withdrawal of a complaint**

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

6. **The Procedure**

6.1. **Stage One - Informal Complaints**

- 6.1.1. Most enquiries and concerns can be dealt with satisfactorily by the appropriate members of staff without the need to resort to the formal procedure. Such individuals should be directed to the person who is directly concerned or best suited to resolve that issue. The details can be emailed to the relevant person if preferred. For students, this is likely to be their PPT. In circumstances where these individuals are the source of the complaint then the appropriate Director or Head of Curriculum or Student Services Manager should be contacted. Details should be logged as 'informal' and placed in the 'Complaints File' which is retained in Student Services.
- 6.1.2. For those individuals who are unsure as to whom to contact then in the first instance they should contact the Student Services Manager from the College in which their child/student is based who will direct them to the most appropriate member of staff.
- 6.1.3. It is always helpful if you can fully explain the nature of the concern and identify the outcome you are looking for. Where appropriate, you may be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with that concern. The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure that you are clear on what action (if any) has been agreed. This may be put in writing if appropriate.
- 6.1.4. In most instances informal complaints will not receive a formal written response but nevertheless must be dealt with promptly.
- 6.1.5. Responsibility for the prompt follow up of informal complaints will sit with the relevant manager. The manager should endeavour to resolve the complaint but should escalate if it is evident that a resolution is not likely to be met. This should be done to prevent it becoming a more serious matter.

6.1.6. There is no suggested timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue through informal discussion, although it would be expected that most issues will be resolved within 15 working days. Where no satisfactory solution has been found, you will be advised that if you wish your concerns to be considered further you should write to the Principal under Stage 2 of this procedure within 15 working days.

6.2. **Stage Two - Formal Complaints**

6.2.1. If your concerns are not resolved under Stage 1, then formal complaints should be submitted in writing and addressed as per section 4.

6.2.2. Any other member of staff receiving a formal letter of complaint must pass the complaint to the email addresses named in section 4 as soon as possible along with any additional information they may hold on the incident. This may help to speed up the response time.

6.2.3. A written acknowledgement will be sent within 5 working days and the details logged on the Complaints Log for checking and reporting purposes. All correspondence will be filed securely.

6.2.4. Any letter submitted should clearly set out the circumstances of the complaint, any individuals or witnesses involved and any relevant dates or times. It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like us to take to resolve your complaint. In all cases your written complaint must include:

- the nature of the complaint;
- details of how the matter has been dealt with so far;
- the names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of all relevant documents; and
- a clear statement of the actions that you would like us to take to resolve your complaint.

6.2.5. Where possible, and to provide the greatest opportunity for the complaint to be actioned, complaints should be submitted in a timely fashion in order to facilitate a resolution.

6.2.6. Complaints will be investigated fairly and quickly with the intention of satisfactorily resolving the matter, identifying the causes and symptoms and upholding or rejecting the complaint for the benefit of all involved.

6.2.7. A considered EEG view on the complaint will be made by the investigating manager. They will ensure that a detailed response with evidence is sent within the prescribed timescale where appropriate.

6.2.8. In certain circumstances EEG may require the complainant to attend a meeting with the EEG representatives to obtain further information. Where this meeting is required the availability of participant may amend the timetable for resolution.

6.2.9. The investigating manager will respond in writing within 15 working days from the date of the receipt of the complaint, detailing the outcome of the

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investigation. If the investigation is going to take more than 15 working days, the investigating manager or their deputy will send a further holding letter.

- 6.2.10. Where complaints are received within 15 working days of a holiday period, or during a holiday period, it is expected that the complaint response will take longer than 15 working days due to the absence of appropriate staff to investigate. This will be confirmed in writing.
- 6.2.11. The investigating manager will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint to Stage Three should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint.
- 6.2.12. Following the resolution of the complaint, where required, the investigating manager must complete the Complaints log.

6.3. **Stage Three – Appeal via Panel Hearing**

- 6.3.1. 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 involves a hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the college. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.
- 6.3.2. A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to Group Director of Compliance and GDPR steve.hope@easterneducationgroup.ac.uk within 10 working days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.
- 6.3.3. The Group Director of Compliance and GDPR will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 working days.
- 6.3.4. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
- 6.3.5. EEG will extend an invitation to the complainant to attend a Panel Hearing and attempt to make these at a time suitable to the Complainant. If the complainant is unable to attend the hearing in person but still wishes to participate, arrangements can be made, on request, to hold the panel hearing remotely.
- 6.3.6. The Group Director of Compliance and GDPR will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 working days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Group Director of Compliance and GDPR will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.
- 6.3.7. If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason or is unwilling to attend the hearing, either in person or remotely, the Group Director of Compliance and GDPR will decide when to hold the Panel Hearing. The Panel Hearing will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties. This will be noted in the records.

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6.3.8. 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 an EEG staff member is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation. You should notify the Group Director of Compliance and GDPR in advance if you intend to bring anyone to the hearing.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

6.3.9. At least 10 working days before the meeting, the Group Director of Compliance and GDPR will:

- a) Confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting and brief details of the Panel Hearing members, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- b) Request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the Panel Hearing at least 5 working days before the meeting.

6.3.10. Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 working days before the date of the meeting. The Panel Hearing will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

6.3.11. The Panel Hearing will not review any new complaints or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

6.3.12. 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.

6.3.13. The hearing will be conducted to ensure that each party has the opportunity to address the Panel. The procedure to be followed during the hearing will be explained to the parties by letter in advance of the hearing. The Group Director of Compliance and GDPR will ensure that sufficient notes are taken to record an accurate reflection of the points considered and any decisions taken or actions agreed. These will not be verbatim minutes.

6.3.14. The Panel Hearing will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The Panel can:

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

6.3.15. If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the Panel will:

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- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to EEG's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

- 6.3.16. The Chair of the Panel will provide the complainant and EEG with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 working days.
- 6.3.17. The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.
- 6.3.18. 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 EEG will take to resolve the complaint.
- 6.3.19. Where appropriate, the letter will include details of how to further escalate their concern to external agencies if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by EEG.
- 6.3.20. A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing.

Appeals for complaint about the CEO or involving Governance

- 6.3.21. If a complaint concerns the CEO or governance (whether this be an individual Governance member, Committee or of the Corporation of West Suffolk College or the Trust Board of Suffolk Academies Trust), then the Panel Hearing will be heard by a Panel of three members which are independent of the complaint – e.g. members not involved in the incidents or events which led to the complaint, or in dealing with the complaint in the previous stages, or have any detailed prior knowledge of the complaint.
- 6.3.22. One of the Panel members will be independent of the governance or management of EEG - e.g. a governance members from another College or MAT who has no conflict of interest or prior knowledge of the compliant.

How to further escalate their concern to external agencies

- 6.3.23. If the complainant believes EEG acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they may be able to escalate their concern after they have completed Stage 3. See [Complain about a school: State schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

7. Unreasonably Persistent Complaints and Unreasonable Complaint Behavior

- 7.1. There are rare circumstances where we will deviate from the Complaints Procedure. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

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- a) where the complainant's behaviour or language towards staff and/or Governance members is abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening;
- b) where the complaint's behaviour is hindering our consideration of complaints and/or the proper running of the academy because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact, such as, if the complainant:
 - i. refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
 - ii. refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
 - iii. refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
 - iv. insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
 - v. introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
 - vi. raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
 - vii. makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
 - viii. changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
 - ix. seeks an unrealistic outcome, such as the inappropriate dismissal of staff
 - x. makes excessive demands on EEG 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
 - xi. knowingly provides falsified information
 - xii. publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums
- c) where the complainant's complaint is clearly frivolous, vexatious and/or has patently insufficient grounds. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as:
 - i. complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
 - ii. insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
 - iii. insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner

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- iv. complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- v. demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value
- vi. where the complainant's complaint is the same, similar to or based on the same facts of a complaint which has already been considered in full.

7.2. In these circumstances, we may:

- a) inform the complainant that their behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent and ask them to change it;
- b) restrict the complainant's access e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times or banning the complainant from the academy's premises. Any such arrangements will be reviewed after six months;
- c) conduct the Appeal using papers only i.e. not hold a Panel Hearing; or
- d) refuse to consider the complaint.

7.3. In all cases we will write to tell the complainant why we believe their behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent, what action we are taking and the duration of that action.

7.4. We may take the decision not to respond to any further correspondence where:

- a) we have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns;
- b) the complainant has been given a clear statement of our position and their options; and
- c) the complainant contacts us repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.

7.5. The case for ceasing further correspondence is stronger where:

- a) letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive or make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff;
- b) we have reason to believe the complainant is contacting us with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience;
- c) the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff and/or Governance members, we will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

8. Complaint Campaigns

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- 8.1. For the purposes of this policy, a complaint campaign is defined as a complaint from three or more separate individuals (whether or not connected with a College or EEG) which are all based on the same subject.
- 8.2. Depending on the subject in question, we may deviate from the procedure set out in this policy and instead:
 - send a template response to all complainants and/or
 - publish a single response

9. Records of Complaints

- 9.1. A record will be kept of all written complaints, including at what stage they were resolved and action taken by us as a result of those complaints regardless of whether they were upheld.
- 9.2. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where:
 - access is requested by the Secretary of State;
 - disclosure is required in the course of an inspection;
 - an individual has a legal right to access their own personal data contained within such documentation;
or
 - under other legal authority.
- 9.3. We will make the findings and recommendations of the panel available for inspection to the CEO and to Governance members.

Appendix 1 - Complaint Form

Your name:	
Student's name (if relevant):	
Your relationship to the student (if relevant):	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Day time telephone number	
Evening telephone number	
Email address:	
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the Trust/college about it.	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
Signature:	
Date:	
Official use	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By who:	
Complaint referred to:	
Action taken:	
Date:	

Appendix 2. Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- a) Explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- b) Co-operate with the college in seeking a solution to the complaint
- c) Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- d) Ask for assistance as needed
- e) Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- f) Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigating manager

The investigating manager's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- a) Providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - i. Sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - ii. Interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - iii. Consideration of records and other relevant information
 - iv. Analysing information
- b) Liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigating manager should:

- a) Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- b) Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- c) Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- d) Be mindful of the timescales to respond
- e) Prepare a comprehensive report for the principal or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

- f) The principal 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 team

The complaints team should:

- a) Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- b) Liaise with staff and Governance members (as appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- c) Be aware of issues regarding:
 - i. Sharing third party information
 - ii. Additional support required – e.g. interpretation support or where the complainant is a young person
- d) Keep records.

Group Director of Compliance and GDPR

The Group Director of Compliance and GDPR is the contact point for the complainant and the Panel Hearing and should:

- a) 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)
- b) 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
- c) Collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: Stage 1 paperwork, college and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- d) Record the proceedings
- e) Circulate the minutes of the meeting
- f) Notify all parties of the Panel's decision.

Panel Hearing Chair

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

- a) Both parties are asked (via the Group Director of Compliance and GDPR) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting

- b) 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
- c) 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
- d) The remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- e) 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.
- f) 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
- g) Both the complainant and the college 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
- h) The issues are addressed
- i) Key findings of fact are made
- j) The committee is open-minded and acts independently
- k) 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
- l) The meeting is minute
- m) They liaise with the Group Director of Compliance and GDPR.

Hearing Panel members

Hearing Panel members should be aware that:

- a) the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
- b) the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between EEG and the complainant
- c) 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
- d) many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
- e) Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child:
 - i. extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a young person and present during all or part of the meeting

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- ii. careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the young person does not feel intimidated.
 - iii. the views of the young person should be respected and given equal consideration to those of adults.
 - iv. If the young person is the complainant, the Panel should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the 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 young person needs to attend.
 - v. However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the young person to attend a part of the meeting that the Panel considers is not in the young person's best interests.
- f) The welfare of the young person is paramount.

Revision History – Complaints Policy

Revision date	Reason for revision	Section number	Changes made
March 2024	EEG Procedure		New Policy