



The Olympus Academy Trust Complaints Policy

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Amendment History

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v1.2	4 th May 2021		Reviewed by RNC.
v1.3	6 th May 2021		Reviewed by ARC
v1.4	24 th May 2021	Trust Complaints Coordinator	Review of policy by Trust Complaints Coordinator and VWV Solicitors following comments by ARC.
v1.5	27 th May 2021		Approved by the Board of Trustees
v2.0	27 th May 2021		Policy Issued
v3.0	8 th August 2022	Trust Complaints Coordinator	Policy reviewed – no changes needed
v4.0	17 th September 2023	Trust Complaints Coordinator	Policy review – amendment to time scales at Stage 3 and additional sentence added to 11.2. Duplicate paragraph removed on 11.12 as already shown as 11.13
V5.0	3 rd July 2024	Trust Complaints Coordinator	Amendment made to section 11 to clarify who an independent panel member can be Timescale for Stage 3 response changed to 15 days to bring in line with stage 2 Amendment made to allow for any member of the Executive Leadership Team to be able to be both the investigator and decision maker (ie to sign the letter).
V5.1	8 th April 2026	Trust Complaints Coordinator	Policy updated following Trust review to improve clarity, accessibility and procedural robustness. Amendments include clearer guidance on timescales where complaints are complex or require external investigation, strengthened expectations and reassurance around informal resolution and escalation, additional clarity on Stage 3 panel hearings (including agenda structure and independence), inclusion of a roles and responsibilities appendix, and confirmation of the Department for Education's role following completion of all complaint stages. No change has been made to the three-stage structure of the procedure.
V6.0	June 2026	Director of Governance	Approved at ARC

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1. Purpose of this policy

The Olympus Academy Trust is committed to working in partnership with parents and carers and resolving concerns as early, respectfully and effectively as possible. This policy explains how parents, carers and the Trust can raise and respond to concerns and complaints in a clear, transparent way.

The policy is designed to:

- deal with concerns fairly, consistently and in a timely manner
- support positive relationships between families and schools
- meet the requirements of the Department for Education and Ofsted
- provide clarity for parents, carers and staff about what to expect at each stage

Most concerns can be resolved quickly through discussion. The formal complaints process is there for when this is not possible.

2. Scope of this policy

This policy applies to complaints from:

- parents or carers of current learners
- parents or carers of prospective learners (children who have applied for a place, are in the admissions process, or are being considered for admission)
- parents or carers of learners who were on roll within the last three months

Complaints must relate to the education, services, facilities or actions of a school or the Trust.

This policy does not apply where there are separate statutory processes, for example admissions appeals, exclusions, SEND tribunals or staff disciplinary matters.

The Trust recognises that it may receive concerns or complaints from individuals who are not parents or carers of learners at the school, for example members of the local community or other stakeholders. These will be considered appropriately but do not fall within the scope of this formal complaints procedure and will not normally proceed through its stages.

Where a concern is better addressed through another process, the individual will be advised accordingly.

3. Key definitions

Concern	An expression of worry or doubt that requires clarification, reassurance or a response.
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a failure to act, where resolution has not been possible informally.
School days	Days when the school is open to learners during term time (not including INSET days or school holidays)
Trust	The Olympus Academy Trust

School	Any school in the Trust
Learner	A registered learner of any school in the Trust, or a prospective learner or a former learner who was a registered learner within the past three months
Prospective Learner	Children who have applied for a place, are in the admissions process, or are being considered for admission

4. Principles that underpin the process

The Trust will act fairly, transparently and respectfully, focusing on resolution rather than blame and following clear staged processes.

We will:

- listen carefully and treat all concerns seriously
- be open, fair and respectful
- focus on resolving issues rather than allocating blame
- follow clear stages, one level at a time
- keep written records and explain outcomes clearly

We expect that everyone involved:

- communicates respectfully
- keeps the focus on the issue rather than individuals
- avoids abusive, aggressive or threatening behaviour

5. Raising a concern or a complaint

Concerns or complaints can be raised in person, by telephone or in writing.

Parents are encouraged to:

- start with the person closest to the issue. This is mostly likely to be the class teacher, tutor, subject teacher or Head of Year.
- explain what happened, when and who was involved
- state clearly what outcome they are seeking

We will make reasonable adjustments to support parents with disabilities or additional needs, including providing assistance with written submissions.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated unless the issue raises serious safeguarding or welfare concerns.

Parents are encouraged to raise concerns and complaints as they arise where possible, rather than allowing multiple issues to build up over time. Early discussion often allows matters to be resolved informally and quickly. However, the Trust understands that some issues are serious or sensitive and may need to be escalated directly through the formal complaints process.

6. Timescales

Timescale for raising complaints

Parents and carers should normally raise concerns or complaints within **three months** of the issue arising. However, we encourage concerns to be raised as early as possible, as this helps us investigate effectively and resolve matters more quickly.

Complaints submitted outside this timescale will only be considered where the Trust is satisfied that there are **exceptional reasons** for the delay.

Exceptional circumstances may include, but are not limited to:

- serious illness, bereavement or other significant personal circumstances which reasonably prevented the complainant from raising the complaint earlier
- where the complainant could not reasonably have known about the issue within the normal timeframe
- safeguarding-related concerns, particularly where it was not appropriate or safe to raise the issue at the time
- evidence that the complainant was actively attempting to resolve the matter informally during the three-month period
- delay caused by misleading information, lack of clarity, or significant delay on the part of the school or Trust
- complaints raising issues of sufficient seriousness that it would be unreasonable not to consider them, despite the passage of time

The decision whether to accept a complaint outside the normal timescale rests with the Trust. The complainant will be notified in writing of the decision and the reasons for it.

While the Trust aims to respond within the published timescales at each stage, this is not always possible. Some complaints are complex, involve multiple issues, or require the appointment of an external investigator. In these circumstances, additional time may be needed to ensure the matter is investigated thoroughly and fairly. Where this happens, parents will be informed of the reasons for the delay and provided with revised timescales. This supports timely investigation while ensuring that evidence is still available and recollections remain reasonably clear.

The Trust appreciates parents' patience and understanding in these situations.

Complaints made during school holidays are treated as received on the first school day after the holiday.

7. Stage 1 – Informal resolution

Purpose: to resolve issues quickly through discussion with school staff.

Who to contact

Parents are encouraged, in the first instance, to contact the member of staff most closely involved.

- class teacher or form tutor

- subject or year leader
- headteacher, only where appropriate

This supports early, informal resolution and enables the Headteacher to consider the complaint appropriately should it escalate.

If you are unsure of who to contact, please send your concern to the enquiries email address of the school or, alternatively, to the Trust Complaints Coordinator (complaints@olympustrust.co.uk).

What happens

- the concern will be acknowledged within three school days
- the school may investigate, hold a meeting or speak to staff involved
- a response will usually be provided within fifteen school days; this may be a verbal or written informal response.
- Stage 1 remains an informal process, even where the concern is escalated within the school to more senior staff, including the Headteacher. Escalation to the Headteacher does not automatically initiate Stage 2 unless the complaint is formally recorded and investigated under the Stage 2 procedure.

If the issue is resolved, the process ends here. If it is not resolved, parents may progress to Stage 2.

Parents should not approach individual Governors or Trustees to raise concerns or informal complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints during later stages of the procedure.

If you are unsure of who to contact, please email complaints@olympustrust.co.uk for support.

8. Stage 2 – Formal complaint

Purpose: to formally investigate unresolved concerns.

How to submit - Formal complaints should be made in writing and should include:

- details of the complaint
- what has already been done to try to resolve it
- the outcome being sought

However, if you need any support with writing your complaint, please contact complaints@olympustrust.co.uk.

Complaints should normally be sent to the headteacher of the relevant school.

Complaints about the headteacher or Trust leadership should be sent to the Trust Complaints Coordinator (complaints@olympustrust.co.uk).

Complaints about the Chair of Trustees, any individual trustee or the whole Trust Board should be sent to the Trust Complaints Coordinator (complaints@olympustrust.co.uk).

Acknowledgement

- Complaints will be acknowledged within three school days

Investigation

- An appropriate senior leader or independent investigator will be appointed
- Relevant staff may be interviewed
- Written records must be kept

Please note, an independent investigator will only be appointed in exceptional circumstances which will be decided by the Trust. Parents are not able to request an independent investigator.

Response

- Where the investigation has been delegated to a senior member of staff or independent third party, they will prepare a report on the investigation to be considered by the Headteacher, Chair of Trustees or CEO, who will then write the response to the complainant
- A written response will be provided within fifteen school days
- If a meeting with the parent takes place, the written response will be provided within fifteen school days of the meeting date.
- The response will explain the findings, decisions and any actions taken
- The letter will explain how to request consideration of escalation to Stage 3, should the parent remain dissatisfied with the handling of the complaint at Stage 2.

9. Stage 3 – Complaint panel hearing

Purpose: to provide an independent review of the handling and outcome of the complaint.

Requesting a panel

- Requests must be made within fifteen school days of the Stage 2 response
- The request must explain why the parent remains dissatisfied with the handling of the complaint at Stage 2, and what aspects of that handling they believe were flawed.
- The request should also indicate the outcome the parent is seeking.
- The Stage 3 complaints panel hearing will not be arranged until this information has been received.

The panel

- Consist of three members with no prior involvement in the complaint
- At least one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school in line with statutory expectations.
- The panel will be made up of two Olympus governors or trustees and one independent member
- A Trustee cannot act as the independent member; however a governor from another school within the Trust can be an independent panel member.

- For the purposes of this policy, an independent panel member means a person who is not employed by the Trust, is not a trustee or governor of the school being complained about, and has had no prior involvement in the management, operation or consideration of the complaint.

The hearing

- Held within fifteen school days where possible
- Parents may bring a friend or relative for support.
- The Trust would not normally expect learners to attend a Stage 3 complaints panel hearing. Where a complaint relates to a learner, the panel will take appropriate steps to understand the learner's account through alternative means, such as written statements or information provided by staff. In exceptional circumstances, and only where it is considered necessary and appropriate, the panel may seek further information, ensuring that the welfare of the learner remains paramount at all times.
- The Stage 3 complaints panel is not a legal or adversarial process.
- Parents are not normally permitted to be legally represented at a Stage 3 panel hearing.
- In exceptional circumstances, the Trust may agree to the presence of a legal representative, for example where the Trust is also legally represented, or where a failure to allow representation would result in clear unfairness.
- Where permission is granted, the legal representative may attend in an advisory capacity only and may not answer questions on behalf of the complainant, examine witnesses, or otherwise act in a legal or adversarial manner.
- The Chair of the panel retains full discretion to manage the hearing and to require that the process remains fair, respectful and proportionate.
- The panel will consider evidence in a way that minimises any potential distress to pupils and avoids direct involvement wherever possible.

Outcome

- The panel makes findings and recommendations
- The outcome is confirmed in writing within fifteen school days

This concludes the Trust's complaints procedure.

10. After the complaints process

If parents believe the Trust has not followed the complaints process correctly, they may refer the matter to the Department for Education after Stage 3.

The Department for Education will normally only consider concerns about the handling of a complaint once all stages of the Trust's complaints procedure have been completed in full, including Stage 3. Parents are therefore encouraged to allow the Trust the opportunity to consider and respond to complaints through each stage of the process before referring the matter externally.

This ensures that concerns are considered as fully and fairly as possible before any external review.

The Department for Education cannot overturn the outcome of a complaint or re-investigate the matters raised. Its role is limited to considering whether the complaints procedure has been followed appropriately and in line with regulatory requirements.

Ofsted does not investigate individual complaints but may use information received about complaints from parents during inspections.

11. Behaviour and unreasonable complaints

The Trust expects all communication to be courteous and respectful.

Unacceptable behaviour includes:

- aggressive or abusive communication
- personal attacks against staff
- use of social media to pursue complaints

Where behaviour becomes unreasonable, the Trust may:

- pause the complaint process
- set clear communication boundaries
- issue warnings
- restrict access to school premises where necessary

Any such action will be proportionate and reviewed.

Any measures taken will not restrict a complainant's ability to have their complaint fairly considered.

12. Handling complex, extensive or AI-assisted complaints

The Trust recognises that some complaints may be submitted as detailed or highly technical documents, including those produced with the assistance of digital or AI tools, or where a number of concerns have been brought together into a single submission. The origin or format of a complaint does not affect how it is considered; however, complaints must be sufficiently clear, proportionate and focused for a fair and timely investigation to take place. Where a complaint is particularly lengthy, complex, or raises multiple issues (including matters which have not previously been raised at the time they occurred), the Trust may need to seek clarification, ask the complainant to identify the key issues to be considered, or agree an appropriate scope for review. In such cases, the Trust may also extend its usual timescales in order to ensure that the matters raised are properly understood and investigated in a fair, consistent and proportionate manner.

13. Record keeping and confidentiality

The Trust keeps confidential records of formal complaints, including:

- the issues raised

- outcomes and actions taken
- whether complaints reached Stage 2 or 3

Records are managed in line with data protection law and retention policies.

14. Accessibility and publication

This policy is published on school and Trust websites and is available in alternative formats on request via complaints@olympustrust.co.uk.

15. Links to other Policies

- Parent and visitor code of conduct
- Trust Data Protection Policy

16. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement

We are committed to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment where every individual is valued and respected. Our policies reflect our dedication to creating a workplace that embraces differences and promotes fairness. We believe that diversity enriches our organisation and drives innovation, and we strive to ensure that all employees have equal opportunities to succeed and thrive.

Appendices

Appendix A – Complaint Form

The Trust complaint form may be used but is not compulsory. Support is available for anyone who needs help completing it; please contact complaints@olympustrust.co.uk if you need any help.

Please ensure you include all details, including what actions you feel might resolve the problem. Please note that there may be times when the resolution you seek is not possible.

If you prefer to complete this form online, please follow the link [here](#).

Your name:	
Learner's name:	
Your relationship to the learner:	
Address:	
Phone Number:	
Email Address	
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school/Trust 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:	

Appendix B – Statutory and Regulatory Framework

This Complaints Policy has been written to meet the requirements of Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

It has also been informed by:

- Department for Education best practice guidance for academy complaints procedures
- guidance on how the Department for Education considers complaints about academies
- Ofsted guidance on the use of complaints information

The Olympus Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that its complaints procedures are compliant with statutory requirements, transparent, and accessible to parents and carers.

Appendix C – Matters Outside the Scope of This Policy

This Complaints Policy does not apply to areas where there are separate statutory or legally defined processes.

These include, but are not limited to:

- admissions decisions and statutory admissions appeals
- permanent exclusions and exclusion appeals
- SEND matters that are subject to statutory assessment or tribunal processes
- staff grievances or disciplinary matters
- whistleblowing concerns, which follow the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy
- safeguarding allegations, which are managed under safeguarding procedures
- complaints about the curriculum where there is no statutory entitlement

Where a concern is raised that falls outside this policy, the Trust or school will advise the parent of the appropriate process to follow.

Non-parental complaints

- *concerns or complaints raised by individuals who are not parents or carers of current or recent learners (these will be considered outside of the formal complaints procedure as set out in Section 2)*

Data protection matters

- *complaints relating to the handling of personal data, subject access requests, data breaches, or privacy concerns, which are managed in accordance with the Trust's Data Protection Policy and associated procedures*

Appendix D – Delays, Suspensions and External Investigations

There may be circumstances where it is not possible or appropriate to continue with the complaints process within the published timescales.

This may include situations where:

- safeguarding investigations are being undertaken
- the police or other external agencies are investigating matters linked to the complaint
- tribunal or court proceedings are ongoing
- a complainant has commenced legal action relating to the subject of the complaint

In these circumstances, the Trust may pause or suspend the complaints procedure until the external process has concluded. Parents will be informed in writing where this happens, with an explanation and, where possible, an indication of when the complaints process may resume.

Delays will be kept to the minimum necessary, and parents will be kept informed of revised timescales.

Stage 2 complaints are responded to within fifteen school days wherever possible. However, complaints that raise multiple issues, relate to events over a prolonged period, or require the use of an external investigator may take longer to investigate fully. In such cases, the Trust will update the complainant in writing, explain the reasons for the delay, and confirm revised timescales.

The Trust is committed to ensuring that investigations are proportionate, thorough and fair, rather than rushed, and appreciates the patience and understanding of parents while this work is completed.

Appendix E – Stage 2 Investigation Guidance

At Stage 2, the purpose of the investigation is to establish the facts and consider whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.

An appropriate senior leader or independent investigator will be appointed.

The investigation may include:

- reviewing relevant policies, procedures and records
- speaking with the complainant to clarify remaining concerns
- interviewing staff or others involved, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keeping written records of interviews and evidence considered

The investigator will make findings based on a balance of probabilities and prepare a written record of their conclusions.

The Stage 2 response will:

- explain what was investigated
- set out the findings and reasons for the decision
- identify any actions to be taken
- explain how the complaint can be escalated to Stage 3

A pack will be provided to each Headteacher which gives detailed information on how to complete a complaint investigation as well as appropriate templates for letters, etc.

Appendix F – Stage 3 Complaint Panel Hearing Procedure

A Stage 3 Complaint Panel Hearing provides an independent review of the handling and outcome of the complaint. The panel's role is to review the handling and outcome of the complaint at Stage 2. It is not a re-investigation and will not normally consider new issues that have not previously been raised.

Panel composition:

- the panel will consist of three people with no prior involvement in the complaint
- at least one member will be independent of the management and running of the school
- a governor from a different school within the Trust may act as the independent member
- trustees may not act as the independent member

Before the hearing:

- all parties will be asked to declare any conflicts of interest
- documentation will normally be circulated at least five school days in advance
- late evidence will only be accepted where the panel agrees it is relevant and significant

The hearing:

- will be held in private
- will be chaired by one panel member
- will be minuted
- may be adjourned at the Chair's discretion where appropriate

The agenda for the hearing is likely to follow the following structure:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Explanation of the purpose of the hearing and the process to be followed
3. Statement from the complainant
4. Statement and response from the school
5. Questions from the panel to both parties
6. Final comments from both parties (complainant first, followed by the school; no new evidence to be introduced at this stage)
7. Panel adjournment for consideration and decision-making
8. Close of the hearing, with confirmation that the written outcome will follow

The Chair of the panel may adjust the order slightly where this supports clarity or fairness, while ensuring that both parties are treated respectfully and given the opportunity to be heard.

The hearing is not a legal process, and the panel's role is to review the handling and outcome of the complaint, rather than to reinvestigate matters from the start.

If a parent does not attend without good reason, the panel may proceed in their absence.

Following the hearing, the panel will make findings and recommendations and confirm these in writing within fifteen school days.

Appendix G – Serial, Persistent and Repetitive Complaints

A complaint may be considered serial or persistent where:

- all stages of the complaints process have been completed
- the complaint has been closed
- the complainant continues to raise the same or substantially similar issues

The Trust will not label a complaint as serial or persistent simply because a parent has exercised their right to escalate a complaint or refer it externally.

Before taking action, the Trust will ensure that:

- all reasonable steps have been taken to address the complaint
- the complainant has been provided with a clear final response
- the procedure has been fully followed

Where a complaint is considered serial or persistent, the Trust may limit further responses while ensuring the complainant is informed in writing.

Appendix H – Unreasonable Behaviour and Communication Boundaries

The Trust recognises that concerns about children's education can be distressing. However, unacceptable behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- abusive, aggressive or threatening language
- persistent personal attacks on staff
- excessive contact that disrupts school or Trust operations
- publishing harmful or misleading information on social media

Where behaviour becomes unreasonable, the Trust may:

- set clear expectations for communication
- introduce a single point of contact
- place limits on methods or frequency of contact
- pause the complaints process
- restrict access to Trust premises where necessary

Any actions taken will be proportionate and reviewed regularly.

Appendix I – Complaint Campaigns and Collective Complaints

A complaint campaign may arise where multiple complaints are received on the same subject matter, often from individuals not directly connected with the school.

In these cases, the Trust may:

- issue a single response addressing the common concern
- publish a response on the Trust's website
- respond directly only where appropriate

This approach ensures transparency while allowing the Trust to manage resources effectively.

Appendix J – Record-Keeping, Confidentiality and Data Protection

The Trust keeps a written record of all formal complaints, including:

- the issues raised
- how the complaint was resolved
- findings and recommendations
- actions taken

Records are managed in accordance with data protection legislation and the Trust's retention schedule.

Complaint records are confidential and will only be shared where lawful or necessary, including with the Department for Education or Ofsted during inspection or review.

Appendix K – Roles and Responsibilities within the Complaints Process

This appendix sets out the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the Trust's complaints procedure. It is intended to support consistency, transparency and fairness in how complaints are managed.

1. The complainant

The complainant is responsible for:

- raising concerns as early as possible where appropriate
- clearly explaining the issues they wish to be considered and the outcome sought
- engaging constructively and respectfully with the complaints process
- responding to reasonable requests for information or clarification
- treating staff, governors, trustees and panel members courteously throughout

The Trust understands that raising concerns about a child's education can be distressing and will seek to support complainants to engage with the process appropriately.

2. School staff (Stage 1)

School staff involved at Stage 1 are responsible for:

- listening to concerns carefully and respectfully
- attempting to resolve matters informally where possible
- explaining what action can reasonably be taken
- keeping brief records of concerns raised and actions agreed
- signposting parents to the formal complaints procedure where resolution is not possible

3. Headteacher or senior school leader

The headteacher, or a delegated senior leader, is responsible for:

- acknowledging formal complaints promptly
- ensuring an appropriate investigation is commissioned
- cooperating with investigators and providing relevant information
- considering investigation findings
- issuing or contributing to a clear written response that explains decisions, actions taken and escalation routes

4. Investigator (Stage 2)

The investigator, whether a Trust leader or an external investigator, is responsible for:

- establishing the relevant facts in a fair, impartial and proportionate manner
- reviewing relevant documentation, policies and records
- speaking with the complainant and relevant staff where appropriate
- maintaining accurate written records of evidence considered
- producing a written summary of findings to inform decision-making

The investigator must have had no prior involvement in the complaint or the matters under investigation.

5. Trust Complaints Coordinator

The Trust Complaints Coordinator is responsible for:

- overseeing the operation of the Trust complaints procedure
- acting as a point of contact for complaints escalated to Trust level

- monitoring and managing timescales, including advising where extensions are necessary
- ensuring complainants are kept informed where delays occur
- coordinating Stage 3 complaint panel hearings
- ensuring appropriate records are kept in line with data protection requirements

6. Decision maker (Stage 2)

The decision maker at Stage 2, normally a senior Trust or school leader with appropriate authority, is responsible for:

- reviewing the investigation findings
- determining whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld
- deciding any appropriate actions or learning points
- issuing a written outcome letter that clearly explains the decision and next steps

7. Complaint panel (Stage 3)

The role of the complaint panel is to:

- review the handling and outcome of the complaint at Stage 2
- consider whether the complaints procedure has been followed appropriately
- consider whether the conclusions reached were reasonable in light of the evidence
- make findings and, where appropriate, recommendations

Panel members must:

- have had no prior involvement in the complaint
- declare any conflicts of interest
- act independently, impartially and fairly
- treat all parties respectfully

8. Panel Chair

The Panel Chair is responsible for:

- explaining the purpose and structure of the hearing
- managing the conduct and order of the hearing
- ensuring both parties have a fair opportunity to be heard
- maintaining a respectful and non-adversarial atmosphere
- leading the panel's deliberations and decision-making

9. Clerk or minute taker

The Clerk or nominated minute taker is responsible for:

- supporting the organisation of the panel hearing
- circulating documentation within agreed timescales
- taking an accurate record of the hearing
- supporting the communication of the panel's written outcome

10. Governors and Trustees

Governors and trustees are responsible for:

- ensuring an effective and compliant complaints policy is in place
- monitoring complaints trends at school and Trust level
- learning from complaints to improve practice where appropriate

- not becoming involved in individual complaints except where formally required under this procedure

Individual governors or trustees must not act informally on complaints raised with them.