

Addendum to the School Complaints Policy

St Patrick's is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. During the Covid-19 pandemic the governing board of St Patrick's school have agreed that alternative arrangements may be required to safely progress complaints through the various stages of the school complaints policy.

Formal Stage 1

If the Headteacher wishes to seek clarification of the complaint from the complainant but considers it inadvisable to invite "visitors" to school due to the pandemic, an alternative method of communication may be considered. This may include convening a "virtual" meeting or a telephone call.

When making their response at Stage 1, the Headteacher should request if the complainant wishes to escalate their complaint to Stage 2, they should contact the clerk by email and provide the email address of the clerk.

Formal Stage 2

During any period in which corona virus restrictions are in place the governing board may choose to convene the hearing by remote access. When making this decision governors and Trustees must consider the needs of the complainant (as far as this is possible) and the latest public health guidance (including the [guidance for full opening of schools](#))

When deciding to hold a hearing "remotely" the governing board must ensure that:

- all the participants agree to the use of remote access
- all the participants have access to the technology which will allow them to hear and speak throughout the meeting, and to see and be seen,
- all the participants will be able to put across their point of view or fulfil their function
- the meeting can be held fairly and transparently via remote access

Arranging a remote access meeting

When the governing board have determined that a "remote" hearing should be held the Clerk will explain the technology the Board propose to use to the complainant and should ensure that the complainant is in agreement with this. If the complainant does not agree to a meeting being held via remote access the complainant should be made aware that the hearing is likely to be delayed.

Governing boards, must comply with relevant equalities legislation and recognise that some participants may find it difficult to participate in a remote access meeting (for example, if someone has a disability or if English is not their first language).

Running the meeting

When a meeting is held via remote access, every effort should be made by the Chair to check the complainant understand the proceedings and can engage with them, to ensure the meeting is conducted fairly.

If, once the meeting starts, the meeting cannot proceed fairly (for example, because a complainant cannot access the meeting), the governing board should adjourn the meeting.

The use of remote access does not alter other procedural requirements for complaints hearings. Parents may bring a friend or representative, as normal.

To help meetings run smoothly and ensure they are accessible for all parties the Clerk should:

- provide clear instructions to parties about how to join the meeting virtually, and distribute the relevant papers in a timely manner ahead of the meeting
- ensure the chair is prepared to explain the agenda at the start of the meeting, and to provide clear guidance on how the meeting will be run, for example:
 - how participants should indicate they wish to speak
 - how any 'chat' functions should be used
 - whether there will be any breaks in proceedings
- consider holding a pre-meeting with attendees to check that the available technology is suitable, and all participants understand how to access the meeting