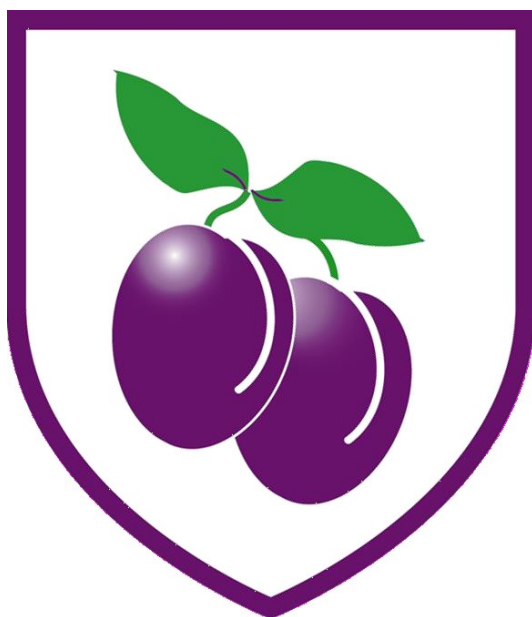


Complaints procedure

Plumcroft Primary School



Original policy approved by	Carlos Lorenzo - 2 March 2026
Revised draft prepared	September 2026
Reason for amendment	Leadership structure changed with effect from 1 September 2026
Revised policy approval	To be completed by the governing board / delegated committee
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Next full review due	September 2028

Draft for governance approval

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1. Definitions, leadership structure and aims

1.1 Definitions

The Department for Education (DfE) guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A concern is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.
- A complaint is an expression or statement of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.

In most cases, a concern can be resolved through informal means. A complaint will follow the formal procedures set out in this policy.

1.2 Leadership structure and terminology

With effect from 1 September 2026, the school leadership structure includes both an Executive Headteacher and a Headteacher. The Executive Headteacher is the senior executive leader at the top of the school management structure and the Headteacher reports to the Executive Headteacher.

For the purposes of this complaints procedure, this distinction is important. A complaint about the Headteacher will normally be considered first by the Executive Headteacher. A complaint about the Executive Headteacher will be considered through the governing body route set out in section 8.

Where the Executive Headteacher has had substantial prior involvement in the matter, or there is another conflict of interest that could reasonably call impartiality into question, an alternative suitably skilled and impartial person may be appointed in accordance with section 8. The complainant will be told who will deal with the complaint and why.

1.3 Aims

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents/carers of pupils at the school and from others who are entitled to use this procedure.

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
- make sure that decisions 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 complaints can inform school improvement and evaluation

We try to resolve concerns by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, the formal complaints procedure will be followed. A complainant who wishes to make a formal complaint will not be prevented from doing so by being required to complete an informal stage first.

The school will aim to give complainants the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. We will publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website. Throughout the process we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved and make reasonable adjustments where needed.

By adhering to these principles, we uphold the school's core values of respect, integrity, inclusion and accountability. Complaints, when handled well, can strengthen trust and contribute positively to school improvement.

2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the Education Act 2002, which requires maintained schools to have and publicise a procedure for dealing with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides where no separate statutory procedure applies.

It is based on Department for Education guidance for maintained schools on school complaints procedures, including the model complaints procedure and guidance on serial and unreasonable complaints. It also reflects the maintained schools governance guidance current in 2026, including the distinction between the school's executive leader and other senior leadership roles.

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for group and school-based providers in relation to complaints about the school's fulfilment of EYFS requirements.

3. Scope

This procedure covers complaints about the school, its staff, the delivery of education and other services or facilities it provides, unless a separate statutory or internal procedure applies.

The following matters are normally dealt with under separate procedures:

- admissions and admissions appeals
- statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN), which are matters for the local authority
- matters likely to require a child protection investigation, which must be handled under safeguarding procedures and statutory guidance
- suspension and permanent exclusion
- employee whistleblowing, staff grievances and internal staff disciplinary or capability procedures
- school re-organisation proposals
- complaints about the content of the national curriculum
- complaints about the content of the daily act of collective worship

The following points are important so that matters are not excluded too broadly:

- complaints about the school's own SEN provision or support are within this complaints procedure unless another statutory route applies

- complaints about the delivery of the curriculum, including religious education and relationships, sex and health education, are within this complaints procedure
- complaints about the handling of a request to withdraw a pupil from religious education or collective worship are within this complaints procedure
- complaints from volunteers or members of the public are not automatically treated as employee whistleblowing and may fall within this complaints procedure
- complaints from parents or members of the public about staff conduct may be considered under this complaints procedure; if the matter also requires staff disciplinary action, that separate process will remain confidential

Complaints about services provided by third parties using school premises or facilities should normally be directed to the provider concerned under the provider's own complaints procedure.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response if they:

- follow this procedure
- co-operate with the school throughout the process and respond to deadlines and communications promptly
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved with respect
- do not approach individual governors about the substance of a live complaint
- do not publish confidential details about the complaint on social media or other public forums

4.2 The investigator

An individual may be appointed to investigate a complaint and establish the facts. They will:

- interview relevant parties and keep appropriate notes
- consider records and written evidence and keep these securely
- prepare a clear report for the Headteacher, Executive Headteacher or complaints committee, as appropriate, setting out the facts, findings and any potential solutions or recommendations

4.3 The complaints co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator may be the Executive Headteacher, Headteacher, designated complaints governor, School Business Manager or another staff member providing administrative support, depending on the nature of the complaint. No person who is the subject of the complaint, or whose prior involvement creates a conflict of interest, will act as complaints co-ordinator for that complaint.

The complaints co-ordinator will:

- keep the complainant updated at each stage
- make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising, as appropriate, with staff, the Headteacher, Executive Headteacher, chair of governors, governance professional/clerk and local authority
- be aware of issues relating to sharing third-party information and any additional support or reasonable adjustments needed by the complainant
- keep appropriate records

4.4 Governance professional / clerk to the governing board

The governance professional / clerk will:

- be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee at the review stage

- circulate relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings
- arrange the complaints hearing
- record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing
- help protect the impartiality of governors by ensuring that live complaint details are shared only with those who need them

4.5 Committee chair

The committee chair will:

- chair the meeting and ensure that everyone is treated with respect
- make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee and have a fair opportunity to present their case

5. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- what has happened
- who was involved
- what the complainant feels would put things right

5.1 Timescales

The complainant should normally raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint concerns a series of related incidents, it should normally be raised within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions where there are valid reasons for delay and the complaint can still be investigated fairly. We will not apply the time limit as an absolute bar without considering the individual circumstances.

Complaints received out of term time will normally be treated as received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales set out in this policy, we will set a revised timescale, tell the complainant the new deadline and explain the reason for the delay.

5.2 Complaints about fulfilment of early years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of EYFS requirements and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school will keep a written record of the complaint and outcome (see section 11) and make it available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can contact Ofsted if they believe that the school is not meeting EYFS requirements. Current contact details include 0300 123 4666 and enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. The school will signpost parents to the current Ofsted contact information on GOV.UK.

If the school becomes aware that its early years provision is to be inspected by Ofsted, it will notify parents and carers and will supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

6. Informal concerns

Our school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters quickly and at the earliest appropriate stage. In many cases, additional information, clarification or discussion will resolve an issue without the need to move to the formal complaints procedure.

Concerns should normally be raised initially with the class teacher or relevant member of staff. If the concern relates to a wider issue, or if the complainant feels unable to approach that member of staff directly, it should be addressed to a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Headteacher.

If the concern is about the Headteacher, it should be addressed to the Executive Headteacher. If it is about the Executive Headteacher, it should be addressed to the chair of governors via the school office and marked private and confidential.

Concerns may be raised in person, by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unsure who to contact, they should contact the school office at office@plumcroft.greenwich.sch.uk and the matter will be directed appropriately.

The school will acknowledge an informal concern within 10 school days. The acknowledgement will indicate how the school intends to proceed and the anticipated timescale for resolution.

The informal stage may involve a meeting, in person or virtually, between the complainant and the appropriate member of staff, usually a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The purpose will be to clarify the issues, explore possible resolutions and seek to resolve the matter collaboratively. Following the meeting, the school will normally provide a written response within 10 school days summarising the discussion and confirming any agreed actions.

A brief written record of informal concerns and their outcomes will be kept in line with data protection requirements to support consistency, identify recurring themes and inform improvement.

Where a concern raises safeguarding issues, it will be handled under safeguarding procedures. Where a complaint about staff conduct may also require disciplinary action, the complaint may continue under this procedure as appropriate, but any staff disciplinary process and outcome will be dealt with separately and confidentially. Whistleblowing concerns raised by employees will be dealt with under the school's whistleblowing procedure.

If the matter is not resolved informally, or the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint, they will be advised how to progress to the appropriate formal stage.

7. Stages of complaint (not complaints about the Headteacher, Executive Headteacher or governors)

We have adopted a 2-stage process for dealing with formal complaints:

- Stage 1 - formal investigation
- Stage 2 - review panel

7.1 Stage 1: formal investigation

Formal complaints can be raised by letter or email (preferred), over the phone, in person, or by a third party acting on behalf of the complainant. Where a third party acts on behalf of a complainant, appropriate consent may be required before personal information is shared.

The complainant should provide relevant dates, times, names of witnesses where known, copies of relevant documents and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If a complainant needs assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office at office@plumcroft.greenwich.sch.uk.

The Headteacher, or another appropriate senior leader acting on the Headteacher's behalf, will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt in writing within 10 school days.

The Headteacher, or designated senior leader, may arrange a meeting to clarify the complaint and seek a resolution. The complainant may be accompanied and should tell the school in advance who will attend with them.

The school may need to refuse a request for a particular person to attend where there is a conflict of interest or another reasonable concern. The complainant will be told as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made.

The Headteacher, or another suitably skilled and impartial person appointed by the Headteacher, will investigate the complaint. The written outcome, including reasons and any further right of escalation, will normally be sent within 10 school days of the investigation being completed.

How to escalate a complaint

If the complainant wishes to proceed to stage 2, they should inform the governance professional / clerk to the governing board within 10 school days of the stage 1 outcome. Requests outside this timeframe will be considered where there are exceptional circumstances.

The request may be made by letter or email, over the phone, in person, or through a third party acting on behalf of the complainant. The complainant should explain why they remain dissatisfied, how they believe stage 1 did not resolve the complaint, and what outcome they are seeking. The clerk will acknowledge the request within 10 school days.

7.2 Stage 2: review panel

Convening the panel

The review panel will normally consist of 3 suitably skilled and impartial members of the governing board who have had no prior involvement in, or detailed knowledge of, the complaint that could reasonably call their impartiality into question. The panel will select a chair from among its members.

If there are not enough impartial governors available, the school will seek suitably skilled independent panel members from other schools or the local authority, as appropriate.

The complainant will be given reasonable notice of the review panel date. The clerk will aim to arrange a date within 10 school days of the request where possible. If reasonable attempts have been made to agree a date and the complainant rejects proposed dates without good reason, the clerk may set a date and the panel may proceed on the basis of written submissions if necessary.

Written material will normally be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the meeting. The hearing will be properly minuted.

At the meeting

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings are not normally permitted unless required as part of a reasonable adjustment or agreed by all parties in advance. Any consent will be recorded in the minutes.

The complainant and appropriate school representative(s) will have the opportunity to make written or oral submissions. The complainant may attend and be accompanied by a suitable companion. Legal representation is not normally encouraged because a complaints panel is not a legal proceeding, but it may be considered where appropriate. A school employee called as a witness may seek support from their union or representative.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

Each party will have a fair opportunity to present evidence, call relevant witnesses where appropriate, and answer questions. Once the presentations and questions are complete, the complainant and school representatives will withdraw while the panel considers the evidence and reaches its findings.

The panel will prepare findings and recommendations. The complainant and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint will receive the outcome in writing. Minutes and other information will be shared subject to appropriate confidentiality and redaction. The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection by the Executive Headteacher or Headteacher, as appropriate, except where doing so would create a conflict of interest.

The outcome

The committee can uphold the complaint in whole or in part, or dismiss it in whole or in part. If the complaint is upheld, the committee may decide appropriate action to resolve it and, where appropriate, recommend changes to systems or procedures to reduce the risk of recurrence.

The school will normally inform those involved of the decision in writing within 10 school days of the hearing, giving reasons and explaining any further route available.

8. Complaints about the Headteacher, Executive Headteacher, a governor or the governing board

Because the school now has both a Headteacher and an Executive Headteacher, the route for complaints depends on which role is the subject of the complaint. The following routing reflects the leadership structure in place from 1 September 2026 and applies from the date this revised policy is formally adopted and published.

Subject of complaint	Stage 1	Stage 2
Headteacher	Executive Headteacher, or a suitably skilled and impartial person appointed by the Executive Headteacher	Committee of impartial governors
Executive Headteacher	Chair of Governors or another suitably skilled and impartial governor	Committee of impartial governors not involved at stage 1
Headteacher and Executive Headteacher jointly	Chair of Governors or another suitably skilled and impartial governor	Committee of impartial governors not involved at stage 1
Chair of Governors or an individual governor	Suitably skilled and impartial governor, arranged through the governance professional / clerk	Committee of impartial governors not involved at stage 1
Chair and Vice-Chair jointly, the whole governing board, or the majority of the governing board	Independent investigator	Committee of independent governors sourced from outside the governing board

8.1 Stage 1: formal

Complaints about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Executive Headteacher via the school office and marked private and confidential. The Executive Headteacher will acknowledge the complaint and will either investigate it personally or appoint another suitably skilled and impartial person to do so. The complaint will not normally be sent directly to the Chair of Governors simply because it concerns the Headteacher.

If the Executive Headteacher has had substantial prior involvement in the matter, is a witness to the events complained of, or there is another conflict of interest that could reasonably call impartiality into question, the Executive Headteacher may refer the matter to the Chair of Governors / governance professional so that an alternative investigator can be appointed. This is an exception to protect fairness, not the normal route.

Complaints about the Executive Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office and marked private and confidential. The Chair, or another suitably skilled and impartial governor where appropriate, will carry out the stage 1 process.

Complaints jointly about the Headteacher and Executive Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office and marked private and confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor, or the governing board should be addressed to the governance professional / clerk via the school office and marked private and confidential.

For complaints about the Headteacher, Executive Headteacher or one member of the governing board, the stage 1 decision-maker will follow the same core steps set out in section 7.1: clarify the complaint, consider relevant evidence, investigate fairly, provide a reasoned written outcome and explain the right to escalate.

If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair, the entire governing board, or the majority of the governing board, an independent investigator will carry out stage 1. They will be appointed by the governing board or, where appropriate, with support from the local authority and will provide a formal written response at the end of the investigation.

How to escalate a complaint

If the complainant wishes to proceed to stage 2, they should inform the governance professional / clerk in writing within 10 school days. Requests received outside this timeframe will be considered in exceptional circumstances. The clerk will need details of why the complainant remains dissatisfied and what they believe would resolve the complaint. The clerk will acknowledge receipt within 5 school days.

8.2 Stage 2: review panel

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, Executive Headteacher or one member of the governing board, a committee of suitably skilled and impartial governors will hear the complaint afresh at stage 2, following the principles in section 7.2. No governor who investigated, decided or had material prior involvement in stage 1 will sit on the stage 2 panel.

If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair, the entire governing board or the majority of the governing board, a committee of independent governors will hear the complaint. Independent panel members may be sourced from local schools or the local authority and will follow the stage 2 process in section 7.2.

9. Referring complaints on completion of the school procedure

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after completing the school's complaints procedure, they may refer the complaint to the Department for Education (DfE).

The DfE will not normally re-investigate the substance of the complaint. It considers whether the school followed its published complaints procedure and whether the governing body has acted in accordance with relevant education law and reasonably in the exercise of its functions.

Current information on how to complain to the DfE is available on GOV.UK under "Complain about a school to the Department for Education". This information will be included in the final outcome letter where appropriate.

10. Unreasonable and persistent complaints

10.1 Unreasonable complaints

Most complaints will be raised in good faith and will be treated seriously. However, conduct associated with a complaint may become unreasonable where, for example, a person:

- refuses to articulate the complaint, the grounds for it or the outcome sought despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the investigation process
- refuses to accept that particular issues are outside the scope of this complaints procedure
- insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways incompatible with this procedure or with fair process
- introduces large volumes of trivial or irrelevant material and insists that it is all answered immediately
- makes unjustified complaints about staff dealing with the issue and seeks to have them repeatedly replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds without good reason
- repeatedly raises substantially the same complaint after it has been fully investigated and answered
- seeks an unrealistic outcome or makes excessive demands on school time through frequent, lengthy or repetitive contact

- uses threats, abusive, offensive or discriminatory language, harassment or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes confidential or otherwise unacceptable information about a live complaint on social media or public forums

This list is not exhaustive. Any decision to apply restrictions will be evidence-based, proportionate, related to the conduct or complaint rather than a label attached to the individual, and kept under review.

Complainants should try to limit communications while a complaint is being progressed. Repeated correspondence can delay an outcome.

Steps we may take

We will take reasonable steps to address the substance of a complaint and give the complainant a clear statement of the school's position and their options. Where possible, the Headteacher or Executive Headteacher, depending on the complaint route, will discuss concerns informally before applying communication restrictions. If the complaint concerns the Executive Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will take this role.

Where excessive contact causes significant disruption, the school may introduce proportionate arrangements such as a single point of contact, a reasonable limit on the frequency of contact, asking the complainant to use a representative, or another suitable communication strategy. Any restriction will be confirmed in writing and kept under review.

In response to serious aggression or violence, the school may contact the police, consider barring an individual from school premises in accordance with relevant guidance, and put appropriate support in place for staff.

10.2 Serial or persistent complaints

If the school has fully completed its complaints procedure on a particular issue and substantially the same points are repeatedly raised, further correspondence on that issue may be treated as serial or persistent. The school will not treat a person as “serial” simply because they have made complaints or exercised a right to escalate a complaint.

The school may decide to stop responding to substantially repetitive correspondence where all of the following apply:

- every reasonable step has been taken to address the concerns
- a clear statement of the school's position and available options has been provided
- the person continues to contact the school repeatedly making substantially the same points

The case for limiting further responses is stronger where communications are abusive or aggressive, contain insulting personal comments or threats, or there is evidence that contact is intended primarily to cause disruption or inconvenience. If the school decides to stop responding on the same issue, it will explain this in writing and will still consider genuinely new and materially different complaints.

10.3 Duplicate complaints

If the school has resolved a complaint under this procedure and receives a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, it will assess whether there are new aspects or information that were not previously considered.

If there are no materially new issues, the school may explain that the matter has already been investigated and that the local process on that issue is complete, and signpost the complainant to the appropriate external route if dissatisfied. If there are materially new issues that warrant further consideration, the appropriate procedure in section 6, 7 or 8 will be followed.

10.4 Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic, especially from people unconnected with the school, it may publish a single response on the school website or issue a template response, while preserving the right of an individual complainant to use the normal procedure where their complaint raises distinct personal issues that require consideration.

11. Record keeping and confidentiality

The school will record the progress of formal complaints, including actions taken at each stage, the stage at which the complaint was resolved and the final outcome. Records will also include relevant correspondence and notes of meetings and telephone calls.

Complaint records will be treated as confidential and stored securely. Access will be limited to those who need the information to administer, investigate, decide or review the complaint, and to those who need anonymised information for legitimate governance oversight.

Information may also be disclosed where required by law or regulation, including to the Secretary of State or a person acting on their behalf, during inspection, or following a valid information rights request. Any disclosure under data protection or freedom of information legislation will be considered on its facts and will be subject to applicable exemptions, redactions and third-party rights.

Records will be retained only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, the school's privacy notices and records retention schedule.

The details of a live complaint, including the identities of individuals involved, will not normally be shared with the whole governing board because governors may later be required to sit on an impartial review panel. If the whole governing board has already received significant detail about a complaint, the school will consider using an independent panel where reasonably practicable.

A complainant may request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias. The governing board will consider any evidence provided and will not unreasonably withhold agreement where the appearance of bias would undermine confidence in the process.

12. Learning lessons

The Executive Headteacher will review operational themes and underlying issues arising from complaints with the Headteacher and other leaders where appropriate, while respecting confidentiality. Where a complaint concerns the Executive Headteacher or governance, the Chair of Governors will ensure that any learning is considered by the appropriate person or committee without compromising the impartiality of any live or future panel.

Anonymised themes and lessons may be reported to the governing board so that the school can improve its procedures, communication, provision and practice.

13. Monitoring arrangements

The governing board will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure and whether complaints are being handled properly and within reasonable timescales. The Chair of Governors will monitor the number and nature of complaints and will review underlying themes in line with section 12, without sharing unnecessary details of live complaints with governors who may later be needed for a panel.

Complaints records are logged and managed by the School Business Manager, with appropriate oversight by the Executive Headteacher and governance professional / clerk.

This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years, or earlier where there is a significant change in legislation, DfE guidance, governance or leadership structure. Formal approval will be by the governing board or the committee to which the governing board has validly delegated this function.

14. Links with other policies

Policies and procedures dealing with related matters include:

- child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- admissions arrangements and admissions appeals information
- suspension and permanent exclusion policy / procedures
- staff grievance procedure
- staff disciplinary and capability procedures
- whistleblowing policy
- special educational needs policy and SEN information report
- privacy notices and records retention schedule
- behaviour policy

Appendix A - quick routing guide

This guide is intended to make the revised leadership route clear. It does not replace the detailed provisions above.

If the complaint is about...	Send it to...
A member of staff / school service	Headteacher or appropriate senior leader
The Headteacher	Executive Headteacher
The Executive Headteacher	Chair of Governors
The Headteacher and Executive Headteacher jointly	Chair of Governors
Chair of Governors or another governor	Governance professional / clerk
Whole governing board / Chair and Vice-Chair jointly / majority of governors	Governance professional / clerk, who will arrange an independent route