**COMPLAINTS POLICY**



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| Agree Date | Reviewed | Person Responsible |
| 2018 Sept | 2019 Sept | Mr Smith |

**Introduction**

At Upper Ballyboley Primary School we all work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. Our aim is to deal with issues and problems before they become a ‘complaint’. However there is a clear protocol to follow if necessary and the steps to follow and their outcome are outlined in this document.

**1.** If any parents are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child’s class teacher immediately. There is no doubt that if a concern is shared with the class teacher they can either reassure worried parents or together devise steps to take to address the concern. Parents must never worry about sharing their concerns with the class teacher. They will always be taken seriously and due consideration given to a mutually agreeable resolution.

**2.** We promise we will always be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and to deal with them as swiftly as possible. Our focus will always be on the child and what is best for him/ her.

*If you have any issues please talk to the teacher as soon as possible. Concerns about matters other than in the classroom should be raised with the Principal. We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.*

**aims**

When dealing with complaints the school will;

* encourage resolution of all concerns as quickly as possible
* provide timely responses to concerns and complaints
* keep you informed of progress
* ensure a full and fair investigation of your complaint where appropriate
* have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved
* respect confidentiality
* fully address complaints and provide an effective response
* take appropriate action to rectify the issue and prevent it happening again where appropriate
* be responsive to learning from outcomes which will inform and improve practice within the school.

A copy of this Procedure is available on the school’s website or is available from the school on request.

**Initial Concerns**

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| Stage1.  Informal expression of concern made to the school. | In the first instance, the matter should be discussed with the child’s class teacher. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way with apologies where necessary. |
| Stage 2.  Discussion with a members of the school’s senior leadership. | We expect most concerns to be resolved by this stage. However  if the matter has not been resolved and needs further investigation parents must make an appointment with a members of the school’s senior leadership (A member of Permanente full time teaching staff). The senior member of staff will need time to fully investigate the matter and will respond within 7 school days. |

1. **FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE –AT A GLANCE**

**Stage Two**

Write to the Chairperson of Board of Governors

**Stage One**

Write to the Principal

**Time Limit**

Please contact the school as soon as possible, unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered within 6 months of origin of the complaint to the school.

**Stage One**

When making a complaint, contact the school Principal who will arrange for the complaint to be investigated. *If the complaint is about the Principal, proceed to Stage Two.* The school requires complaints to be made in writing, where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process. *(see guidance notes for further information)*

Please provide as much information as possible including;

* name and contact details
* what the complaint is about
* what has already been done to try to resolve it and
* what you would like the school to do to resolve the complaint.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 school working days and a response normally made within 20 school working days of receipt of the complaint. This response will be issued in writing by the Principal and will indicate with reasons whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

***These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.***

If you remain unhappy with the outcome at Stage 1, the complaint may be progressed to Stage 2 which is overseen by the Board of Governors.

**Stage Two**

If the complaint is unresolved after Stage One, write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors *(care of the school and marked ‘private and confidential’).* Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support the complainant with this process. The Chairperson will convene a committee to review the complaint. Please provide as much detail as possible as indicated above.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 school working days and a final response normally made within 20 school working days from date of receipt of the complaint. The response will be issued in writing by the Chairperson of the committee.

***These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.***

**Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)**

If following Stage Two you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you can refer the matter to the Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

The Ombudsman provides a free, independent and impartial service for handling complaints about schools in Northern Ireland.  You have the right to complain to the Ombudsman if you feel that you have been treated unfairly or have received a poor service from a school and your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction.

A complaint should normally be referred to NIPSO within six months of the final response from the School. The school must advise in its concluding letter that the complaint may be referred to the NIPSO if you remain dissatisfied.

Contact details for NIPSO are:

**Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman**

Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

Progressive House

33 Wellington Place

Belfast

BT1 6HN

Freepost: FREEPOST NIPSO

Telephone: 02890 233821

Freephone: 0800 34 34 24

Email: [nipso@nipso.org.uk](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)

Web: www.nipso.org.uk

1. **Scope of complaints procedure**

**4.1** The Complaints Procedure sets out how any expression of dissatisfaction relating to the school will be managed. By taking concerns raised seriously at the earliest possible stage, it is hoped that issues can be resolved quickly and effectively.

***Some examples of complaints dealt with;***

* not following school policy
* communication delays / lack of communication
* difficulties in staff / pupil relationships.

**4.2 Complaints with separate established procedures**

Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. The Principal/ Chair of Governors will advise on the appropriate procedure to use when the complaint is raised.

***Matters may still be referred to NIPSO, if it is felt that maladministration has occurred.***

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| **Exceptions** | **Contact** |
| * Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school * Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) * School Development Proposals * Child Protection / Safeguarding | Contact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) Director of Operations and Estates  Sara Long  Contact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) Director of Children and Young People’s Services Dr Clare Mangan  Contact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) Director of Education  John Collings  Contact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) Director of Children and Young People’s Services  Dr Clare Mangan |

**4.3** The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints, unless deemed by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors to be of a serious nature. The decision of whether to deal with such complaints will be at the discretion of the Board of Governors. *(see guidance notes for further information)*

1. **What to expect under this procedure**

**5.1 Your rights as a person making a complaint**

In dealing with complaint we will ensure;

* fair treatment
* courtesy
* a timely response
* accurate advice
* respect for privacy – complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility of consultation with other appropriate parties about the complaint and
* clear reasons for decisions.

**5.2 Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint**

In making a complaint it is important to;

* raise issues in a timely manner
* treat our staff with respect and courtesy
* provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues raised
* use these procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels.

**5.3 Rights of parties involved during the investigation**

Where a meeting is arranged the complainant may be accompanied but not represented by another person.

This Procedure does not take away from the statutory rights of any of the participants.

**5.4 Timeframes**

Where concerns are raised with the relevant Teacher or Principal, a response will normally be provided during the meeting or within an agreed timeframe.

**Stage 1** – Normally acknowledge within 5 school working days, response normally within 20 school working days

**Stage 2** – Normally acknowledge within 5 school working days, response normally within 20 school working days

If, for any reason, the review of a complaint takes longer to complete, you will be informed of revised time limits and kept updated on progress.

***These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.***

1. **MAKING A COMPLAINT**

**6.1 Equality**

The school requires complaints to be made in writing. Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support the complainant with this process.

**6.2 unreasonable Complaints**

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain.

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been completed and the complaint having been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If they try to re-open the same issue, the Chair of Governors will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant repeatedly continues to contact the school with the same issue it may choose not to respond.

**A full set of guidance materials to support this procedure is currently being developed. It will be helpful to consult this to understand the scope of the complaints procedure.**

**7. Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the complaint schools and complainant will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

* An apology;
* An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
* Assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur;
* Explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again.
* Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the

complaint will not be shared.

* An undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint;
* An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld;
* An explanation that, following investigation, the evidence does not substantiate the concern.

*\*An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an*

*admission of negligence*

**8. Monitoring and review**

The Governors will monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Principal will log all stage 2 complaints received by the school, and record how they were resolved. These will be reported as part of the Principals report to Governors