



# Complaints Procedure For Ballyhackett Primary School

## Our Vision

It is our vision that Ballyhackett Primary School is a place where everyone experiences a sense of belonging to the school family. We are committed to providing a safe, child-centred, high quality learning environment in which pupils are motivated, challenged and supported so that they can become lifelong learners. We aim to establish self-confidence, self-respect and promote consideration for others. We encourage each child to fulfil their intellectual, spiritual, physical, social and emotional potential. Central to the creation of this environment is a commitment to Christian values and the recognition of the worth and value of each child. We believe that pupils, staff, parents, governors and members of the wider community have an important role to play. We believe that we should work together and co-operate with each other in an atmosphere of mutual respect and support, for the benefit of all.

Our school motto promotes this:

*Together Everyone Achieves More*

## Introduction

Ballyhackett Primary School is committed to providing a high quality education service. We believe that this is achieved and sustained through good relationships at all levels and in particular through open and honest communication with parents and others. We recognise, however, that despite the best efforts of teachers and non-teaching staff, there may be occasions when someone may feel that our service is not good enough and they may want to bring a concern or a complaint to our attention. These procedures are designed to ensure that such concerns and complaints are dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner.

## Aims

When dealing with complaints the school will;

- Acknowledge that anyone who wants to raise a concern or complaint, about any aspect of our service has the right to do so.
- We will deal with concerns or complaints according to these procedures.
- We will provide parents with a copy of these procedures.
- Concerns and complaints will be dealt with as promptly, impartially and thoroughly as possible.
- Those bringing concerns or complaints to our attention will be treated courteously and fairly.
- It is expected that those bringing concerns or complaints to our attention will treat teachers and other staff in the same way.
- The concern on everyone's part should be to deal with issues raised in a calm and reasonable manner.
- We believe that the vast majority of concerns and complaints can be dealt with and resolved informally in a spirit of mutual trust and partnership.
- 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

## Informal Procedures

If concerns are dealt with at an early stage, then they are more likely to be resolved and there is no unnecessary dissatisfaction.

If you do have any issues please talk to the class teacher as soon as possible. We ask you to be aware that it is very difficult to deal properly with concerns/complaints during teaching and after-school time. It would be most helpful if you could send a brief note to the teacher outlining your concern or complaint. The teacher will then contact you by telephone. It may be possible to resolve the issue raised by telephone but if not the teacher will arrange to meet with you 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.

## Formal Procedures

If, after the informal procedures outlined above, you feel your concern or complaint has not been satisfactorily dealt with you can raise the matter by following the steps in our Complaints Procedure which follows.

***A copy of the complete policy can be obtained from the school office upon request.***

### **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](http://www.nipso.org.uk) 8

## **1. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**1.1** 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;***

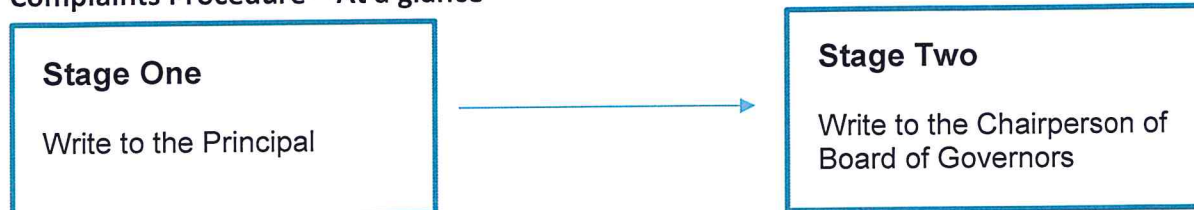
- ☐ not following school policy
- ☐ communication delays / lack of communication
- ☐ difficulties in staff / pupil relationships.

### **1.2 Complaints with separate established procedures**

Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms are listed below. The list is



## Complaints Procedure – At a glance



### 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

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Email: [nipso@nipso.org.uk](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)  
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## 1. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

**1.1** 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.

### 1.2 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.***

Exceptions	Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school</li></ul>	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Operations and Estates Sara Long
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)</li></ul>	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Children and Young People's Services Dr Clare Mangan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School Development Proposals</li></ul>	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Education John Collings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child Protection / Safeguarding</li></ul>	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Children and Young People's Services Dr Clare Mangan

**1.3** 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)*

## **2. WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE**

### **2.1 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.

### **2.2 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.

### **2.3 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.

### **2.4 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.***

## **2.5 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.

## **2.6 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.**