

# **LISBURN CENTRAL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

At Lisburn Central Primary School, we take complaints very seriously. The best interests of pupils, staff and parents are at the very heart of our school ethos. In this regard, we encourage anyone with concerns to speak to us as soon as possible. Concerns dealt with at an early stage are more likely to be resolved leading to no unnecessary dissatisfaction.

Many issues can be addressed by simply talking to the relevant staff in school who are more than happy to help. Open communication and regular engagement between the school, parents/carers and other stakeholders is vital to the effective management of the school.

We welcome open communication with our staff. If parents wish to speak to staff concerning an issue which can be resolved quickly, a few minutes between 8.45am and 8.55am should suffice. However, if a parent wishes to discuss a matter at length then an appointment should be made with the teacher through the School Secretary. Parents must not try to discuss an issue with a teacher during class time as this is designated to teaching and learning.

Parents/carers are reminded that the school has a no tolerance approach to verbal or physical abuse towards pupils, staff or any other adult by a parent/carer and that such action could lead to suspension from the school property by the Board of Governors or involvement of PSNI.

Parents/carers are reminded of their responsibilities in discussing a complaint via social media platforms. If a parent decides to share a complaint about the school via social media platforms before approaching the school, the school reserves the right to refuse to discuss the matter further with the parent. Parents are also reminded that derogatory remarks made against members of staff or linked to any pupils or parents in the context of the school could lead to legal action taken against them.

### **The Aims of Our Complaints Procedure**

When dealing with complaints, the school aims to:

- Encourage resolution of all concerns as quickly as possible.
- Provide timely responses to concerns and complaints.
- Keep complainants informed of progress.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation of the 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.

### **Availability of Procedure**

A copy of this procedure is available on the school's website or is available from the school on request.

### **Time Limit**

To enable complaints to be resolved, please contact the school as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered within 6 months of the date of the incident(s) about which you are complaining.

There are two stages to the complaints procedure:

**Stage One** Write to the Principal

**Stage Two** Write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors

To enable complaints to be resolved, please contact the school as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered within six months of origin.

### **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 the complainant with this process.

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
- 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 complaint. This response will be issued by the Principal.

***Please note that these timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.***

If the complainant remains unhappy with the outcome at Stage One, the complaint may be progressed to Stage Two 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 complaint will be dealt with at a Board of Governors' meeting if it is within the 20 days limit on receipt of the complaint. If this is not the case, the Chairperson will convene a sub-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 response normally made within 20 school working days of receipt of complaint. This response will be issued by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

***Please note that 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.

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)

### **The Scope of the Complaints Procedure**

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

Some examples of complaints would be:

- Not following school policy
- Communication delays or lack of communication
- Difficulties in staff/pupils relationships

### **Complaints with Separate Established Procedures**

Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. The Principal/Chairperson 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**

Admissions/Expulsions/  
Exclusion of children from school

Contact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk)  
Director of Operations & Estates  
Sara Long

Statutory Assessments of SEN

Contact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk)  
Director of Children and Young  
People's Services  
Dr Clare Mangan

School Development Proposals

Contact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk)  
Director of Education  
John Collings

Child Protection/Safeguarding

Contact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk)

Director of Children and Young  
People's Services  
Dr Clare Mangan

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 whether to deal with such complaints will be at the discretion of the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

### **What to Expect Under This Procedure**

#### **Your rights as a person making a complaint:**

In dealing with complaints we will ensure:

- Fair treatment of all parties involved
- 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
- Clear reasons for decisions.

#### **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 issue raised
- Use the procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels.

#### **Rights of Parties involved during 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.

#### **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, complainants 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.***

## **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.

## **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 has been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If they try to re-open the same issue, the Chairperson 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, we may choose not to respond.