



# BALLYCASTLE HIGH SCHOOL

## Interim Complaints Procedure

- *Approval by the Board of Governors – 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019*
- *The implementation of this policy will be monitored by: Senior Leadership Team*
- *This policy will be reviewed every three years.*





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## 1. FOREWORD

### Information specific to each individual school which may be included

#### Statements about;

A positive child-centred ethos is at the heart of Ballycastle High School. This is encapsulated in our school's mission statement and our aims.

It is our intention: to give the pupils the opportunity to develop a positive self-image and the capacity to live as independent motivated adults who have the ability to function effectively as contributing members of society.

Ours is a vibrant school community. The teaching in the school provides pupils with a broad and balanced education, in line with the Northern Ireland Curriculum which promotes the spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, physical, cultural and aesthetic development of each individual.

This procedure is intended to be a good practice guide which will apply to most general complaints received by our school. It is not intended to cover those matters for which there is a specific statutory requirement. Separate procedures exist for appeals relating to special educational needs, school admissions and exclusions. Child Protection and staff discipline issues will be dealt with through procedures that have been adopted for these purposes.

#### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Parents will be made aware how they can raise concerns or lodge a complaint with the school. Complaints procedures will be easily accessible and well publicised.

A complaint is distinct from any formal disciplinary procedure. Staff who may be questioned as part of a complaints procedure will be treated fairly and have an opportunity to put their case. They will be offered support in dealing with any consideration of a complaint.

Confidentiality is vital. All conversations and correspondence will be treated with discretion. Parents must feel confident that a complaint will not disadvantage their child. All parties to a complaint should realise that some information may have to be shared to carry out a thorough investigation.

All complaints will be recorded and monitored to allow any lessons to be learned by the school.

Many issues can be addressed simply by talking to the relevant staff in school who will be happy to help. Open communication and regular engagement between the school staff and the wide range of users is vital to the effective management of the school.

## 2. AIMS

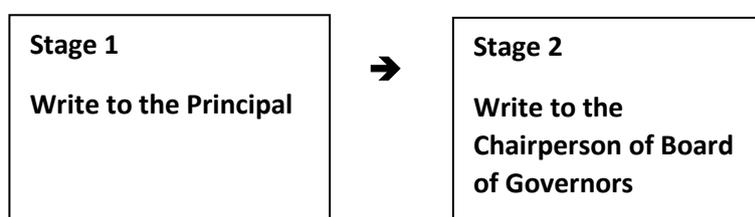
When dealing with complaints the school will;

- 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.

### **3. 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.

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](http://www.nipso.org.uk)

**4. 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.***

### Exceptions Contact

Exceptions	Contact
• Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Operations and Estates
• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Children and Young People's Services
• School Development Proposals	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Education
• Child Protection / Safeguarding	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Children and Young People's Services

**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.

## **5. 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.***

## **6. 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.