

LISMORE

COLLEGE



COMPLAINTS POLICY

THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Lismore College

1. FOREWORD

The Board of Governors together with the Principal set the direction and tone of the school in all that they do and are committed to working with parents in the best interests of their children's education. The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to address complaints raised by parents/guardians.

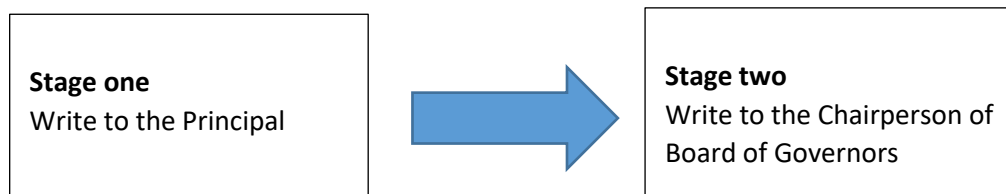
- 1.1** The procedure covers all matters relating to the actions of staff employed in the school and the application of school procedures, where they affect individual pupils. However, school staff, and the Board of Governors recognise the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest possible stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.
- 1.2** **Where it becomes evident at an early stage that a matter should be dealt with according to other established procedures or appeals mechanisms, this Complaints Procedure will be set aside in favour of the agreed procedure such as Child Protection, Special Education, Admissions, Suspensions and Expulsions, Grievance, Discipline, Bullying and Harassment or the Unsatisfactory Teaching Procedure.**
- 1.3** The school will not investigate anonymous complaints, unless deemed by the school to be of a serious nature. Anonymous complaints may be investigated where they relate to alleged Child Protection matters or alleged financial impropriety. This will be at the discretion of the school and Board of Governors.

2. AIMS OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- 2.1** In operating this Complaints Procedure we aim to:
- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
 - Allow swift handling of a complaint within established time-limits for action;
 - Keep people informed of progress;
 - Ensure a full and fair investigation;
 - Have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved;
 - Respect confidentiality;
 - Fully address all aspects of a complaint and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary; and
 - In the interest of continuous improvement, provide relevant information to the school's Senior Leadership Team and Board of Governors.
- 2.2** This Procedure is designed to be:
- Easily accessible and publicised;
 - Simple to understand and use;
 - Impartial; and
 - Non-adversarial.

A copy of this Procedure 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. *(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 and 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: 02890233821

Freephone: 0800 34 34 24

Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk

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

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.