

Complaints Procedure

For

Jordanstown School



Jordanstown School

the Northern Ireland
centre of excellence
for children
who are deaf or
visually impaired

To be reviewed – October 2018

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1. FOREWORD

Jordanstown School's Mission Statement

'Empower our pupils to achieve their full potential and independence'

We will achieve this through:

- High quality learning and teaching
- Individually tailored learning programmes
- Offering a wide range of examination courses and accreditation modules
- Utilisation of a purpose built school environment
- Embracing technology.

In the best interest of all our pupils at Jordanstown School and their academic, emotional and social development we expect all staff, parents and external partners to work together in a positive manner and we promote a welcoming and invitational ethos to our school to achieve this.

We do however appreciate that sometimes there may be moments where a concern occurs and respectful and professional dialogue is needed keeping the best interest of the pupil at the heart of the discussions in order to resolve as appropriate.

Our school welcomes feedback which is used to ensure we continue to strive for excellence in all areas of school life in order to continue to meet all the needs of our pupils.

This policy outlines our procedures in place to work with all parents, staff and external partners where any concerns are raised and at Jordanstown School, we take complaints very seriously.

We have the best interests of all our pupils and their families at the centre of all we do. In this regard, we encourage anyone with a concern to speak to us as soon as possible. If concerns are dealt with at an early stage, then they are more likely to be resolved and there is no unnecessary dissatisfaction.

Many issues can be addressed simply by talking to the relevant member of staff (this would normally be the class teacher in the first instance) – Open communication and regular engagement between the school staff and the wide range of users is vital to the effective management of the school.

We welcome open communication with our staff and you can speak to staff by:

- making an appointment to meet with the relevant member of staff – this can be done by phoning the school office.

- Phoning the school office speak to the relevant member of staff if they are free to do so. If they are unable to speak at that time they will phone you back as soon as possible.
- If your concern is of an urgent/emergency nature please make this known to the member of staff answering the school phone who will then be able to direct the call accordingly if the teacher is unavailable.
- If the concern is of a pastoral/child protection nature please also let the member of staff know this (not the specific reasons) and they will put you through to a member of our safeguarding team as per the Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy. This team is Miss Sturgeon (Designated Teacher), Mr Adams and Mr Murray (Deputy Designated Teachers).
- If there is no answer to your call to school please leave a message on the answer machine and a return of call will be made very soon afterwards. In the best interest of resolving any issue we would ask you phone the school back again within a short timeframe should you be unable to speak to anyone at your first attempt.
- If you have any issues please talk to the teacher in the first instance and if necessary you may also speak to Miss Sturgeon as soon as possible.
- Concerns about matters other than in the classroom should be raised with the Principal or the Vice-Principal. We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

We would need to emphasise that whilst we appreciate concerns can sometimes cause upset all parties involved are expected to treat each other with dignity and respect. With this in mind we believe concerns are soon resolved in the best interest of the pupil involved.

2. AIMS

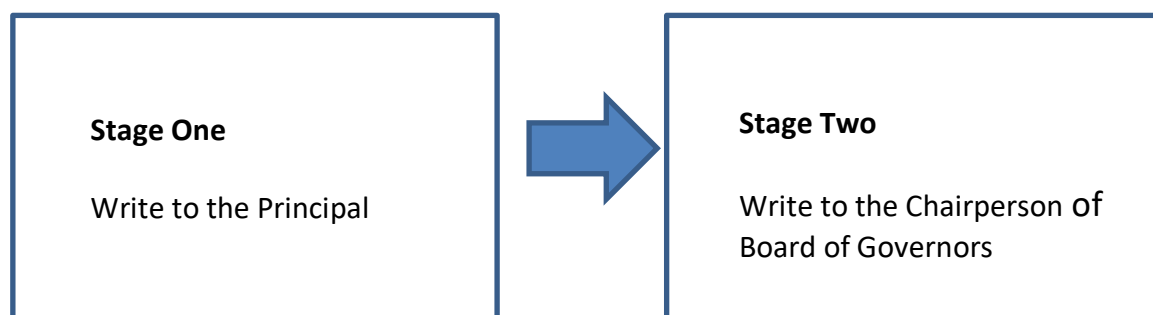
When dealing with complaints the school will;

- 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 www.jordanstownschoo.org or is available from the school on request.

3. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE –AT A GLANCE – should the issue not be resolved through initial contact made with a relevant member of staff:

Please also note that at any of the escalated stages – the Principal will ask if the concern has attempted to be addressed and resolved with the relevant member of staff in the first instance. If it progresses to stage 2 the Chairperson will clarify if the complaint (unless about the Principal) has been brought to the attention of the Principal before involvement of the Board of Governors.



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 10 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 10 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

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 parties 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.