



SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

FOR

St. John the Baptist Primary School

Adopted and approved December 2017

Lead: M Morgan

Pastoral Care

THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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1. FOREWORD

Here at St John the Baptist Primary School, we take complaints very seriously. 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. 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.

- 1.1** *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.*

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

Arranging an appointment to speak with Teacher

In the first instance, a concern or complaint should normally be raised verbally with the class teacher, so that s/he may have an opportunity to address the issue(s).

Please observe the school's existing protocols for arranging and conducting such meetings and follow the school's policy with respect to access to members of staff.

Arranging a meeting outside of teaching hours allows the teacher to prepare in advance of the meeting and also does not impact on the learning process for your or the other children in the class.

This approach will not prevent you from choosing to enter the formal process at a later stage, if you believe that to be an appropriate course of action.

Speak with a member of the Senior Leadership

An open door policy operates with the Senior Leadership. Enquire at the office if the Acting Principal is available to speak to, if it's a matter other than a classroom concern.

If you have any issues, please talk to the teacher 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.

- 1.2** 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.

2. AIMS

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 Management 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 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. (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

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;

- 5.1.1 fair treatment
- 5.1.2 courtesy
- 5.1.3 a timely response
- 5.1.4 accurate advice
- 5.1.5 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
- 5.1.6 clear reasons for decisions.

5.2 Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint

In making a complaint it is important to;

- 5.2.1 raise issues in a timely manner
- 5.2.2 treat our staff with respect and courtesy
- 5.2.3 provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues raised
- 5.2.4 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.

5.5 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.

5.6 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.

Frivolous or vexatious complaints

Where the Board of Governors considers the actions of a parent/group of parents to constitute a frivolous or vexatious complaint, it will seek advice from the relevant employing authority in order to protect staff from further such actions.

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.

6. RECORD KEEPING

The Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Governors will maintain a record of all correspondence, conversations and meetings, concerning your complaint. These records will be held confidentially in the school and will be kept apart from pupil records. All such records will be destroyed **three years after the date of the last correspondence on the issue.**