

Saint Patrick's Primary School Armagh

**PARENTAL COMPLAINTS**  
**PROCEDURE FOR**  
**ST PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL**



**2018-19**

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## **Contents:**

Foreword from the Principal	Pg. 3
Aims of Complaints Procedure	Pg. 4
Making a complaint	Pg. 5
School Complaints Procedure – at a glance	Pg. 6-7
Scope of Complaints Procedure	Pg. 8
What to expect under this Procedure	Pg. 9-10
Monitoring & Evaluation procedure	Pg. 11

## **FOREWORD FROM THE PRINCIPAL:**

### **SCHOOL VISION:**

#### **'We Care, We Share and we Learn'**

Our school vision is a central theme that is reflected throughout everything that makes our school. This includes relationships, curricular, extra-curricular, policy and practice.

**'We Care, We Share and We Learn'** means exactly that. We have a common goal in that we care for each other and share our strengths to help one another to learn. In addition, everyone involved with the school, pupils, teachers, non-teaching staff and parents have a voice and everyone will be listened to. We value and respect pupils' and parents' opinions in this process.

As part of this ethos, the building of strong, reciprocal working relations with parents / guardians is most important. At St. Patrick's Primary 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.

## **AIMS OF SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE:**

When dealing with complaints we aim to:

- 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 your complaint 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.

## **MAKING A COMPLAINT:**

### **IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN / COMPLAINT:**

In St. Patrick's, we take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible. *We welcome open communication with our staff. If a parent / guardian wishes to raise a concern / issue, they should follow the following procedure:*

#### **A. SPEAK TO THE RELEVANT STAFF MEMBER / TEACHER:**

If you have a concern about your child, their work or behaviour, you should talk to your child's teacher initially, as soon as possible or arrange through the school secretary for the teacher to give you a telephone call;

#### **B. SPEAK TO THE PRINCIPAL / VICE-PRINCIPAL:**

If you are not happy with the outcome of your dialogue with the relevant staff member / teacher, you should telephone school to see if you can speak with the Principal/Vice-Principal.

If your initial concern is related ***to a matter other than in the classroom***, you should look to speak to the Principal/Vice-Principal directly.

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, parents/guardians and other stakeholders is vital to the effective management of the school.

If, after following this 'low-level concern' procedure or if the concern/issue is more serious, parents / guardians should follow the following "2-STAGE COMPLAINT PROCESS."

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE – At a glance:

### Stage One

Write to the Principal

### Stage Two

Write to the Chairperson of Board of Governors

#### Time Limit:

To help us resolve your complaint, please contact us as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, we will only consider a complaint within **6 months** of you becoming aware of the issue.

#### 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**. However, where this is not possible the school will make reasonable arrangements to support you.

Please provide as much information as possible including:

- Your 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.

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.

***These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.***

If you are unhappy with the outcome at Stage 1, your 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'***), who 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 **final response normally made within 20 school working days** from date of receipt of the complaint.

***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)

## 1. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE:

**1.1** The Complaints Handling Procedure sets out how any expression of dissatisfaction relating to the school will be managed. By taking concerns raised by parents or others seriously at the earliest possible stage, we hope to resolve issues quickly and effectively.

### 1.2 Complaints with separate established procedures:

Some examples of established procedures or appeal mechanisms are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. Your Principal/ Chair of Governors will advise you on the appropriate procedure to use when you first raise your complaint.

***You may still take your complaint to NIPSO, should you remain dissatisfied upon completion of one of these procedures.***

Exceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school</li><li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)</li><li>• School Development Proposals</li><li>• Child Protection / Safeguarding</li></ul>

**1.3** The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints, unless deemed by the Chair of the Board of Governors to be of a serious nature. The decision of dealing with such complaints will be at the discretion of the Board of Governors.

### **3. WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE:**

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

In dealing with your complaint we will ensure that you receive:

- Fair treatment;
- Courtesy;
- A timely response;
- Accurate advice;
- Respect for your privacy – complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility that we may have to consult with other appropriate parties about your complaint; and
- Clear reasons for our decisions.

#### **3.2 Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint:**

In making your complaint you should:

- Raise issues in a timely manner
- Treat our staff with respect and courtesy
- Provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues you raise
- Use these procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels

#### **3.3 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.

#### **3.4 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 your complaint takes longer to complete, you will be informed of revised time limits kept updated on progress.

***These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.***

### **3.5 Equality:**

The school requires complaints to be made in writing. However, where this is not possible, please contact the Principal who will make reasonable arrangements.

### **3.6 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 has 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, we may choose not to respond.

### **3.7 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.

### **3.8 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.**

**MONITORING AND EVALUATING:**

This policy is continually monitored by the school principal, staff and Board of Governors.  
This policy will be reviewed every three years and/or up dated when advice is given by DENI.

All stake holders will be involved in the review through a consultation process.

Signed:..... Signed:.....  
Chair of the Board of Governors: Principal

Date:..... Date:.....