



Complaints Policy

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1. FOREWORD

An effective Complaints Policy is both a mark of a confident school and recognised good practice. It ensures that concerns are dealt with promptly, fairly and effectively.

Whitehouse Primary School seeks to be a 'listening school' and will do its best to enable parents/guardians to feel confident to raise issues and concerns with appropriate staff.

This commitment is very much embedded in our school's ethos and culture.

Our vision statement is: '**Learning to Live**'. As a school we try to nurture respect and consideration in our students. Equally, we ask our pupils to be self-critical and to seek ways to improve on their previous best. Therefore, as a school we must seek to also model these behaviours. We will always strive to do our best but will also accept reasonable critique to help us provide a better education for our community.

This policy document was not written in isolation. It was developed in the context the school's values and the resulting mission statement.

Values	Contribution of the Complaints Policy
To be a Happy & Healthy Environment	A happy environment requires good relationships between school and home. This means we need to have a method to positively and fairly resolve issues.
To develop Skilled Learners & Flexible Thinkers	As a school we want to be open to improvement. This means we need to be able to accept fair critique.
To value Partnerships both Locally & Globally	At the heart of this policy is the acceptance of parents, and other community members, as valued stakeholders.
To inspire High Aspirations and Achievements	Our pupils will learn best when home and school are in harmony. Therefore, openness to stakeholders is key.

Mission Statement	Contribution of the Complaints Policy
Care & Wellbeing Central	High Level of Compliance - Positive links with home promotes the wellbeing of all.
Health & Sport Promoted	High Level of Compliance - Good relationships promote a healthy emotional ethos.
Involving Parents & Community	High Level of Compliance - Parents and other stakeholders are highly valued.
Learning & Teaching Focused	High Level of Compliance - Strong home/school links improves learning.
Developing Technology & Creativity	High Level of Compliance - Electronic communication will aid access to the policy.
Raising Expectations & Standards	High Level of Compliance - A positive ethos promotes higher standards.
Excellence & Innovation Pursued	High Level of Compliance - A self-evaluative culture promotes innovation.
Networking Locally & Globally	High Level of Compliance - The policy values community partnership.

A school we endeavour through our normal routines and communication to engage with concerns in a friendly and proactive way. It would always be our aim to resolve all disagreements in this sympathetic and informal manner.

At times, however, a more formal approach, as set out in this policy, may be required to reach a satisfactory resolution to a complaint.

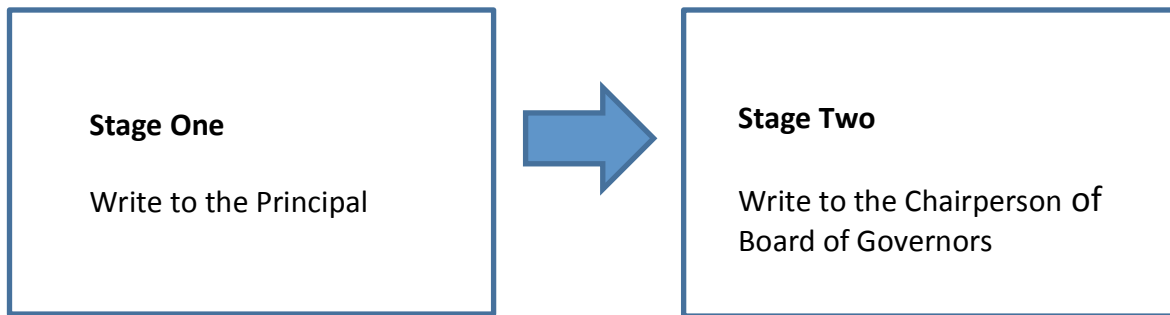
Such complaints will be considered following a clear set of procedures based on Education Authority guidance. These procedures will be made clear to any parent/guardian or member of the public making a complaint.

2. AIMS

When dealing with complaints the school aims to:

- Facilitate our commitment to provide the highest standard of service to all stakeholders;
- To deal with all complaints in a professional and confidential manner;
- In all situations to act with respect and integrity;
- Encourage resolution of all concerns as quickly as possible;
- Communicate effectively on the progress any complaint;
- Ensure a full and fair investigation is completed, if it is required;
- Have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved;
- Fully address complaints and provide an effective response;
- If possible, rectify any issue and put in place preventative measures if applicable;
- Ensure that stakeholders always are informed of the next step if they are not satisfied with how a complaint has been dealt with. They should be directed to the Complaints Policy. A copy of the Complaints Policy 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

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
Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Operations and Estates Sara Long
Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Children and Young People's Services Dr Clare Mangan
School Development Proposals	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Education John Collings
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.

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.