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# Downpatrick Primary School

## School Complaints Procedure

February 2018



# **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR DOWNPATRICK PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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## **FOREWORD**

### **Our School Vision:**

Our vision is for a school which provides equality of opportunity for all in partnership with the whole community, seeking to promote and develop every child's potential to the full in a meaningful and positive way. We strive to ensure that the children in our care are able to make the most of their educational opportunities and experiences with the ultimate aim of preparing them for a confident and responsible adult role in our society. Meeting the moral, spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical needs of our children, whatever their ability, is our priority.

Our school is strongly committed to providing a happy, secure and stimulating, healthy and attractive environment in which all members of our school community - children, staff, parents and governors - work together in an atmosphere of friendship and understanding.

This school builds on these traditional core values whilst embracing innovations in learning and teaching and changing technologies which keeps practice at the forefront of primary education.

### **Our School Aims:**

The school's agreed aims are:

- To provide a happy, safe, caring and stimulating environment for the children each day with a welcoming atmosphere for children, parents and staff where achievements are celebrated;
- To develop in each child high self-esteem, confidence and a true feeling of self-worth and a sense of responsibility;
- To have technology integrated into our curriculum keeping our practice at the forefront of primary education;
- To encourage children to have high expectations and develop independence;
- To develop lifelong learners who are motivated and challenged by high quality teaching and learning within a supportive school environment;
- To promote an ethos that encourages respect for oneself, for others and for property;
- To create a partnership with home based upon respect and trust; encourage parents to become involved in their child's education;
- To develop each child's understanding and mutual respect of other religions, races, cultures, gender, people with disabilities and associated points of view;
- To develop high pupil achievement in a range of areas including academic work, physical, social and moral development and in their standards of behaviour.

### **Aims of This Complaints Procedure**

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 or is available from the school on request.

Here at Downpatrick 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.

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 at Downpatrick Primary School value your comments and perspectives on how we can together make our school serve our children better.

### **Open Communication**

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

Contacting school to arranging a time to meet your child's class teacher.

- This can be by telephone: 02844613934 or by email to the principal: [nstevenson717@c2kni.net](mailto:nstevenson717@c2kni.net) .
- By calling in at the school office and the secretary or the principal will arrange a time for you.

### **Times that teachers are normally available:**

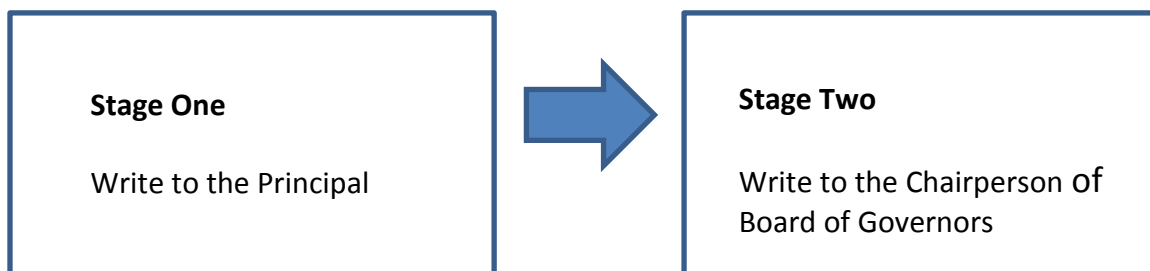
- Teachers are normally available from 8.40-8.50am each school morning and after school from 3.10pm-4pm on Monday or 3.10pm- 4.30pm on Wednesday.
- Please note that the teacher may have a meeting in the morning/afternoon or club after school and may not be immediately available to talk to you but an appointment will be arranged as quickly as possible.

***If you have any issues, please talk to the class 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 will make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.***

## 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 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, you may write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors (*care of the school and marked 'private and confidential'*).

*The Chairperson of Governors - Private and Confidential  
Downpatrick Primary School  
10 Mount Crescent  
Downpatrick  
BT30 6AF*

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.

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)

## SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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 could be:***

- not following school policy
- communication delays / lack of communication
- difficulties in staff / pupil relationships.

### **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.***

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

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 Chairperson of Governors.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE**

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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 10 school working days, response normally within 20 school working days

**Stage 2** – Normally acknowledge within 10 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.***

## **MAKING A COMPLAINT**

### **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.

### **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.