



### **Education Authority**

#### Interim Model School Complaints Procedure

- Guidance materials to be added when received from EA.

To be reviewed **June** 2018

# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

FOR



## Phoenix Integrated Primary & Nursery School

Ratified by Board of Governors: 29.11.17

Review Date: 2 yearly

Chair of Governors

(Await instruction from EA - June 2018)

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## **1. FOREWORD**

### **School Aims and Vision**

#### **“Achieving and Celebrating Together”**

Phoenix Integrated Primary School is a Grant maintained integrated school which provides a high quality learning environment where children from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds, as well as those of other faiths and none, can learn with, from and about each other.

We are committed to the Principles of Integration;

- equality
- faith and values
- parental involvement
- social responsibility

We recognise the growing diversity within the NI society and the Cookstown area. We strive to provide a child centred ethos in which fairness, tolerance, compassion and forgiveness permeates all relationships within the school community.

As an Integrated school it is important to us that parents feel the school is open to receive them. The school operates an open door policy. This does not mean that all doors are unlocked. We are open to parents with a controlled approach to how we work together to creating a safe, secure learning environment for all children. Feedback is extremely important to us and forms a valuable part of our provision. We do understand that there are times when concerns arise and we encourage anyone with a concern or complaint to bring to our attention as early as possible. We have a clearly defined procedure for dealing with any concerns and regularly communicate this to parents.

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.

#### **Contact Procedures:**

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:

## **HOW TO CONTACT YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER?**

- If your child is at Nursery you will have opportunities to speak to staff at drop off and pick up time. Please refer to Nursery arrangements.
- Teachers and Classroom assistants share duty to enable you to drop your children off early in the morning. When on duty staff are not able to have conversations with parents.
- If the teacher is not on duty and available, you may pass on a message. Please remember, teachers are busy preparing for the school day and are not able to commit to a long conversation at this time.
- If you have a simple message for a teacher, please use the homework diary to communicate (all classes). If it is more important you may ring the school and leave a message with office staff. You can request that the teacher returns the call and they will do so at the end of the school day.
- Parents of pupils in Y4-7 should not be walking children to classrooms in the morning. If there is an issue with coming into school, please speak to your child's teacher. You can speak to them at the end of the school day or leave a message for them at the office to call you back.
- If you have a pre-arranged appointment in Y4-7 please use the walk way around the playground.
- Please do not wait outside a classroom for a member of staff to come – speak to someone at the school office.
- Please address any concerns you have about your child directly to the Class teacher, not the Classroom Assistant.

## **HOW WE COMMUNICATE WITH THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY:**

We understand the importance of regular, open communication and are committed to sharing information relating to the school on a regular basis. We do this in the following ways:

- Weekly Note
- Text messaging service
- Website [www.phoenix-ips.org](http://www.phoenix-ips.org)
- Class notes – sent out when appropriate
- Social Media- Facebook is a forum for sharing day to day news from the school.
- Social Media – Our Twitter account shares news about our school in the wider NI community. @phoenixips

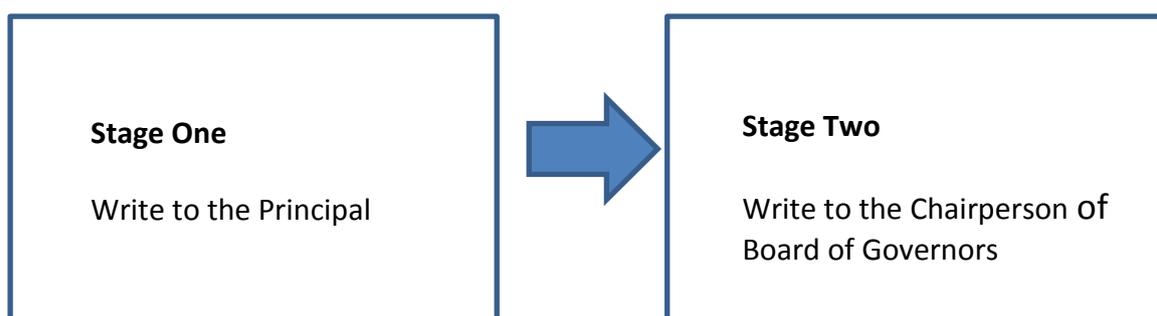
## 2. AIMS

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 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](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)

Web: [www.nipso.org.uk](http://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.***

<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

**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. ***(Please note – Guidance materials are being developed by the Education Authority and will be added to the procedure when complete.)***

## **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.

**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.**