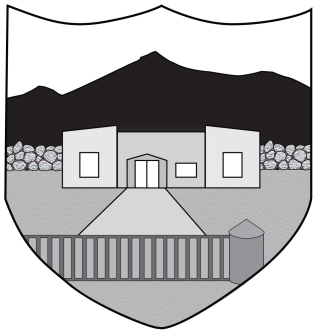
Brackenagh West P.S.

Complaints Policy & Procedure



1. INTRODUCTION

At Brackenagh West 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 welcome open communication with our staff; you can speak to staff by arranging a meeting via the school secretary or arranging a telephone call to discuss matters.

If you have any issues please talk to the teacher / head of year 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.

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. The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to address complaints raised by parents/guardians.

1.1 The Procedure covers all matters relating to the actions of staff employed in the school and the application of school procedures, where they affect individual pupils.

1.2 Where it becomes evident at an early stage that a matter should be dealt with according to other established procedures or appeals mechanisms, this Complaints Procedure will be set aside in favour of the agreed procedure such as Child Protection,Special Education, Admissions, Suspensions and Expulsions, Grievance, Discipline, Bullying and Harassment or Unsatisfactory Teaching Procedure.

1.3 The school will not deal with anonymous complaints (except for those concerning child protection matters) and therefore these procedures do not provide for a resolution of anonymous complaints.

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, keeping people informed of progress;
* ensure a full and fair consideration of the complaint;
* have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved;
* respect confidentiality;
* address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate
* redress, where necessary; and

* provide information to the school's Senior Management Team, Board of Governors and Education Authority, so that services can be improved.

2.2 The procedures are designed to be:

* easily accessible and publicised. A copy of the procedures is available (on the school's website or) on request from the school;
* simple to understand and use;
* impartial; and
* non-adversarial.

3. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE AT A GLANCE

Stage 1 → **Stage Two**
Write to the Principal → Write to the Chairperson of Board of Governors

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 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.

3.4 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. WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THESE PROCEDURES

4.1 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
* reasons for our decisions.

Where the complaint is upheld we will acknowledge this and address the complaint you have raised. If, after consideration, it is judged there are no grounds for your complaint, you will be advised accordingly.

4.2 Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint

In making your complaint we would expect that you:

* 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;

and

* use these procedures fully and engage in them at the appropriate levels.

4.3 Rights of parties involved during the consideration

The process is non-adversarial and does not provide a role for any other statutory or non-statutory body.

Person making the complaint

The complainant many be accompanied by another person where it is accepted, by the Principal and Board of Governors, that this will assist the consideration and resolution of the complaint.

Staff

Staff may seek the advice and support from their professional body or trade union and may also be accompanied by another person where it is accepted, by the Principal and Board of Governors, that this will assist the consideration and resolution of the complaint.

A member of staff who is directly referred to in a complaint will be provided with a written copy of the complaint and details of any information brought by the parent/carer before being required to respond to the matters raised.

Legal Representation

Legal representation or representation by person(s) acting in a professional capacity is not permitted within this procedure.

This procedure does not take away from the statutory rights of any of the participants.

4.4 Where the person making the complaint is a Governor

Where the person making the complaint is a member of the Board of Governors, that Governor will play no part in the management or appeal of the complaint as set out in this procedure.

5. TIMESCALES

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. RECORD KEEPING

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

7. 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.

8. 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.

Please remember that the school is committed to resolving your concerns.