



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

FOR

PORTAVOGIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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1. FOREWORD

Vision

At Portavogie Primary School, we strive to create a nurturing educational environment where every child thrives. Guided by respect, resilience, and a commitment to excellence, we foster a supportive community that celebrates diversity and inspires lifelong learning.

Here at Portavogie Primary School we regularly ask parents, pupils, and staff for feedback on the services we provide.

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.

If you have any issues, please talk to the teacher / Head of Key Stage (Mrs K Spence KS-1 and Mrs K Hughes KS-2) as soon as possible. Concerns about matters other than in the classroom should be raised with the Principal, Mrs V Murray. We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible. Relevant school staff can be contacted via telephone. Our telephone number is 02842771771. Please leave a message and the relevant staff member will return your call. If you are dissatisfied after speaking to a teacher or member of staff, you should speak to the Principal.

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.

3. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PORTAVOGIE PRIMARY AND NURSERY 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.

Time Limit

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 school's Board of Governors.

Stage Two

If the complaint is unresolved after Stage One, write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors outlining your area/s of concern. *The chairperson of our Board of Governors is currently Mr Jim Miskimmin. Please mark your letter 'Private and Confidential'.*

Please address your complaint to:

*Mr Jim Miskimmin (Chairperson of the Board of Governors)
Portavogie Primary School
New Harbour Road,
Portavogie,
BT22 1EE*

Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school and we 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. If you are unhappy with the outcome of a Governor sub-committee, you may write to the governors asking for a review by a governors' 'review panel'.

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 with 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:

Parents may wish to contact the Education Authority by phoning the Director of the area that relates to the complaint. EA switchboard number is : [028 9056 6200](tel:02890566200) and you may wish to speak to:

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

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 complaint's 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.

Additionally, the school will take steps to protect its staff from visitors or parents who are behaving in a way which is considered abusive and/or vexatious. This may include physical or verbal abuse and could include the following (however this list is not exhaustive):

- Speaking to the member of staff in a derogatory manner which causes offence.
- Using aggressive behaviour on school premises
- Swearing, either verbally or in writing despite being asked to refrain from using such language.
- Using threatening language towards school staff which provokes fear.

- Repeatedly contacting a member of staff regarding the same matter which has already been addressed.

Managing unreasonable complainant behaviour

This policy may be invoked if the school considers that a complainant has behaved in a manner which is deemed unreasonable (see above).

Types of actions the school may take:

- Where the complainant tries to reopen an issue that has already been considered through the school's complaints procedures, they will be informed in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.
- Where a decision on the complaint has been made, the complainant should be informed that future correspondence will be read and placed on file, but not acknowledged, unless it contains important new information.
- Limiting the complainant to one type of contact (e.g. telephone, letter, email, etc.)
- Placing limits on the number and duration of contacts with staff per week or month
- Requiring contact to take place with a named member of staff and informing the complainant that if they do not keep to these arrangements, any further correspondence that does not highlight any significantly new matters will not necessarily be acknowledged and responded to, but will be kept on file
- Offering a restricted time slot for necessary calls to specified dates and times
- Requiring any face-to-face contacts to take place in the presence of a witness and in a suitable location
- If the complainant is consistently aggressive and/or abusive to school staff the Education Authority will be contacted and the complainant's licence to be on school premises will be revoked.