



**Procedure for reporting  
concerns or complaints.**



September 2019



## CONTENTS

1. Foreword
2. Aims of Complaints Procedure
3. School Complaints Procedure – at a glance
4. Dealing with a written complaint
5. Scope of Complaints Procedure
6. What to expect under this Procedure
7. Making a complaint



**In Dunclug Nursery School we are committed to providing a happy, safe and stimulating environment to support young children’s learning and development.**

We recognise that the children in our care have individual interests, characteristics and needs and aim to enable each child to develop positive attitudes about themselves and towards their learning by –

- ✿ providing experiences that extend learning and challenge thinking
- ✿ maintaining positive relationships as a staff team, with our children, their parents, the community, the Board of Governors and other relevant agencies
- ✿ promoting the health and wellbeing of our staff, children and their families
- ✿ inspiring and developing all members of our school community

### **Reporting Concerns and Complaints**

In order to,

*‘maintain positive relationships as a staff team, with our children (and) their parents...’* (Dunclug Nursery School’s Mission Statement)

we operate an ‘open door’ policy when it comes to communicating with parents, in the hope that we can allay any concerns and deal with any issues promptly. Parents and carers are encouraged to speak with their child’s class teacher or the Principal, should they have any concerns about their child or to raise a complaint.

Procedures for making a written complaint are detailed in this Policy Statement.

The procedure for reporting concerns regarding the wellbeing of any other child who attends Dunclug Nursery School is detailed in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Document.

## 2. Aims of the Complaints Procedure

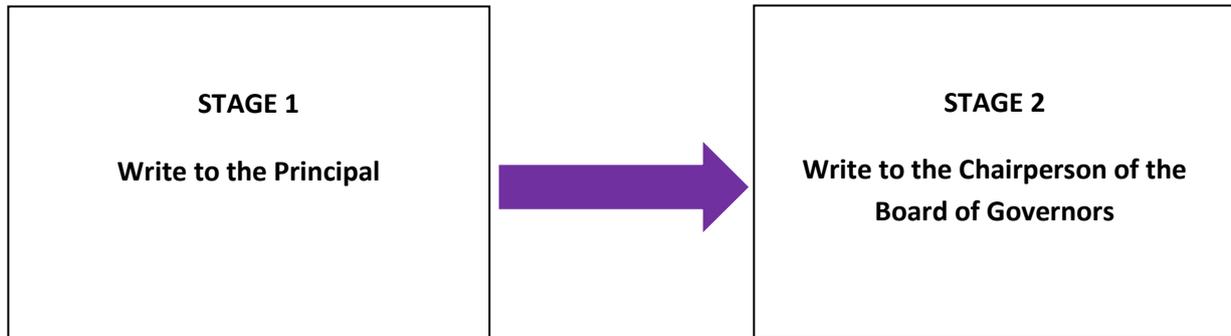
### When dealing with complaints we will –

- ☞ 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

Parents and carers are encouraged to speak with their child’s class teacher or the Principal, should they have any concerns about their child or to raise a complaint. If they would like to make a formal complaint, they should write to the Principal or the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, as detailed below.



#### 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](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)  
Web: [www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk)

## **4. STEPS INVOLVED IN RAISING A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT**

### **4.1 Speaking with the teacher concerned**

In the first instance a complaint may be raised verbally with the teacher concerned, so that she has an opportunity to address the issue(s).

This approach will not prevent you from choosing to enter the formal process later, if you believe that to be an appropriate course of action.

### **4.2 Contacting the Principal**

If your complaint is against a member of staff, or if your complaint remains unresolved after having spoken to the class teacher, you may arrange a meeting with the Principal to discuss the issue(s). In advance of this meeting you should inform the Principal, either verbally or in writing, of the nature of your complaint, so that she may be in a position to respond to the complaint promptly.

In some circumstances the Principal may not be able to deal effectively with your complaint immediately and she may require some time to consider and prepare a response. If further time is required you will be informed of the timescale and the likely date by which a response will be issued.

### **4.3 Making a written complaint to the Principal or Chairperson of the Board of Governors**

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to have your complaint resolved through meeting with the class teacher or Principal, as detailed above, or indeed it may be more appropriate to record your concerns or complaint in writing to the Principal or Board of Governors, as detailed in Section 3.

You should write to the Principal or the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and state the grounds for your complaint, addressing the specific issue(s) that are of concern to you.

***If your complaint is against the Principal you should write directly to the Chairperson.***

You will then receive a written acknowledgement of your letter. This will confirm that your letter has been received, and either –

- ✎ provide a response to the issue(s) raised, or
- ✎ state who is considering your complaint and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued.

### **4.4 Appeals Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors**

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Board of Governors you may write to the Chairperson appealing its decision. Your written request should be as concise as possible and set out specifically the grounds for your appeal.

The Chairperson will establish an Appeals Sub-Committee comprising of at least three members of the Board of Governors who were not involved in the consideration of the original complaint.

You will receive written acknowledgement of your letter. This will confirm that your letter has been received and provide you with the date and time of the meeting with the Appeals Sub-Committee at which you will have an opportunity to explain the grounds for your appeal. The Appeals Sub-Committee will also review all information and correspondence from the original complaint and the consideration by the Complaints Sub-Committee.

You should expect a final written response detailing the findings of the Appeals Sub-Committee, the reasons supporting its decisions and any recommendations, if applicable. Any recommendations will be brought to the Board of Governors for ratification.

The final response from the appeals committee will advise you of your right to refer to the Office of the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman (NIPSO), should you remained dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint.

## 5. THE SCOPE OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

**5.1** 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.

### **5.2 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admissions/ Expulsions / Exclusions of children from School</li></ul>	Contact Director of Operations and Estates – Sarah Long <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)</li></ul>	Contact Director of Children and Young People’s Services – Dr. Clare Mangan <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School Development Proposals</li></ul>	Contact Director of Education – John Collings <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child Protection / Safeguarding</li></ul>	Contact Director of Children and Young People’s Services – Dr. Clare Mangan <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a>

**5.3** 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.

## 6. WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE

### 6.1 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.

### 6.2 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.

### 6.3 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.

### 6.4 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 - Written complaint to the Principal

Normally acknowledged within 5 school working days, response normally within 20 school working days.

Stage 2 – Written complaint to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors

Normally acknowledged 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.***

## **7. MAKING A COMPLAINT**

### **7.1 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.

### **7.2 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 reopen 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.