



# Straid Primary School Complaints Procedure

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## **CONTENTS**

- 1. Foreword**
- 2. Aims of Complaints Procedure**
- 3. School Complaints Procedure – at a glance**
- 4. Scope of Complaints Procedure**
- 5. What to expect under this Procedure**

### GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS' COMPLAINTS.

Here at Straid Primary School, we take complaints very seriously. We have the best interests of 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.

In accordance with the school's provision of Pastoral Care, Governors wish to remind parents of the following guidance.

- Parents can make an appointment with Teachers to discuss the issue.

If Parents wish to seek clarification following the meeting with the Teacher, they may

- Make an appointment with the Principal.

Should Parents fail to resolve the issue after meeting with the Principal, they can;

- write formally to the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

Governors will consider the matter before replying in writing.

If having followed the procedures outlined above, Parents can pursue any matter with the EA Northern Region, by writing to the School Branch at County Hall, Ballymena, 182 Galgorm Rd, Ballymena.

Governors and Staff have always sought to promote good relationships with all our families at Straid Primary School. We are very grateful to Parents for the goodwill and support they continue to display through their attendance at various events run by the school.

## **STRAID PRIMARY SCHOOL.**

### **1. POLICY ON MAKING A COMPLAINT.**

This Policy is designed to establish a clear mechanism for clarifying misunderstandings and the resolution of complaints. A copy of this procedure is available on the school's website or is available from the school on request.

### **2. AIMS.**

Through our Policy we aim to;

- provide an efficient and effective system to investigate issues raised by parents and public.
- ensure issues are dealt with in a fair and courteous manner within the timescales set out.
- improve the service provided to the community.

### **PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES.**

In raising your issue, we would expect that you;

- raise the issue in a timely manner.
- treat staff in a courteous and non-threatening manner.
- provide accurate and relevant information relating to the specific issue.

Speaking with the teacher concerned should always be a parent's first course of action.

- This provides an opportunity to gather information and often clarify misunderstandings.

### **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. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE.**

#### **STAGES.**

#### **Stage 1. Speaking with the Principal.**

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.

In some instances, the Principal will not be able to deal effectively with your concern immediately and will require some time to investigate and prepare a proper response. It is also possible to write/email to the Principal who will then contact you in response within an agreed time period, or if necessary to arrange an appointment.

When writing to school with your complaint, please provide as much information as possible.

Including:

- Name and contact details
- What the complaint is about
- What has already been done to try and resolve it
- 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 reviewed if 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 2.

If the complaint is unresolved after Stage 1, write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors (*C/o 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 Chair will convene a committee to review the complaint. Please provide as much detail as possible as indicated.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 school working days and a final response normally made within 20 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 2 you remain dissatisfied with your outcome of the 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 the NIPSO within 6 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 of NIPSO are:

### **Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)**

#### **Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman**

**Progressive House**

**33 Wellington Street**

**BELFAST**

**BT1 6HN**

**Freepost: FREEPOST NIPSO**

**Email: [nipso@nipso.org.uk](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)**

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

#### 4. SCOPE OF COMPLAINT'S 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 of examples of complaints dealt with:***

- Not following school policy
- Communication delays / lack of communication
- Difficulties in staff / pupil relationships.

#### 4.2 Complaints with 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 / Exclusions / Exclusions 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.

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

### **5.1 Your rights as a person making a complaint**

In dealing with complaints 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 person does not take away from 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

Straid Primary 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 by EA. It will be helpful to consult this to understand the scope of the complaints procedure.**