



PROCEDURE FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT TO THE SCHOOL

Introduction

The college motto, 'Preparing for Life', reflects its purposeful ethos of work and service. Our aim is to develop young people academically, personally, socially and spiritually in an atmosphere where we respect and value one another, and to challenge and support them to achieve their best, ready to serve as valued members of society. Close links are built between home and school which contributes to young people's success within and beyond the classroom. We have the best interests of children and their families at the centre of all we do and we encourage anyone with a concern to speak to us as soon as possible.

Once the school has undertaken to accept a pupil into enrolment then every effort will be made to meet his/her educational needs, and to ensure all staff are committed to that end.

If you have a question or comment about any aspect of school life, please speak to us about it. Many issues can be solved simply by speaking to the relevant staff in school who will be happy to help. If a member of staff is not able to speak with you at the time of contact, your details will be recorded and follow-up contact will be made with you as soon as possible.

Please also use the pastoral structure outlined in our policies, whereby a Form Teacher looks after individual classes, a Head of Year and an Assistant have responsibility for a whole year group and two Pastoral Directors oversee, with the guidance of the Vice-Principals, the well-being of children in Junior and Senior School. There is a School Nurse available every day as well as an independent School Counsellor. The Principal maintains strong pastoral involvement and is available both within and outside of hours to speak to parents. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment in advance.

School Discipline will be applied firmly and fairly and high standards of respect for authority will be expected. Proper application of control and discipline will be done in accordance with the Discipline with Dignity Policy. School staff will be willing to discuss all disciplinary procedures with parents.

In the event that you have a concern or query and are not able to get a resolution, the following procedure is in place.

1. COMPLAINT IN WRITING TO THE PRINCIPAL

1.1 In the event of a parent or a member of the public wanting to make a complaint of any kind to the school, written contact should be made with the Principal, or in her absence, the Deputy Principal, so that the nature of the complaint can be investigated and discussed. There will be a response from the school within 48 hours at the latest.

1.2 The Principal or Vice-Principals will arrange a meeting to discuss the matter raised and create opportunity for a shared understanding of the situation. If an investigation is necessary, this will



be carried out promptly and a reasonable time frame will be agreed. The complainant will receive a response in writing.

1.3 The Principal will take due care to ensure all information concerning any matter raised is accurately considered and will take responsibility for ensuring any error on the part of the school is promptly addressed. Many potential complaints arise from misunderstandings which can be resolved through respectful discussion at an early stage.

1.4 Those making complaints are asked to ensure the validity and accuracy of the complaint. A difference of opinion, for example, a perception which is not substantiated dislike of a system, rule or procedure, or hearsay without evidence is unlikely in itself to be a reason for official complaint unless policy has not been properly applied. However, it is important to openly discuss all such matters, to come to mutual understanding and to establish/re-establish working respect.

2. COMPLAINT IN WRITING TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

2.1 If the parent is dissatisfied after the initial contact and discussion with the Principal, then a written complaint should be made to the Chair of the Board of Governors.

The Chair of Governors will check firstly that the Principal/Vice Principal has had opportunity to respond to the complaint before intervention. Thereafter, the Governors will acknowledge the complaint within 48 hours and will respond fully to the complaint as quickly as possible.

Firstly, the Complaints Committee will meet to consider all the information provided by the complainant and the school. There will be a written response and, if necessary, an invitation to meet the Committee and/or the Chair.

2.2 If the complaint concerns perceived inadequate performance on the part of any member of the school community and this is found to be untrue, the evidence to that effect will be explained. If it is found to be true, immediate steps will be taken to ensure a programme of recovery/improvement is in place.

2.3 If the complaint concerns any allegation of bullying or abuse on the part of another child, this will be handled as per our Anti-Bullying Policy. Any pupil found guilty of physical bullying will be suspended, followed by therapeutic intervention to ensure learning has taken place. Other types of bullying may also result in suspension and this will be followed by team-building and tolerance building. There will be an emphasis on addressing the underlying cause of difficulties, supportive intervention for the child who has experienced bullying behaviour and the child who engaged in bullying behaviour, and in bringing about lasting change. There will be confidentiality in such matters.

2.4 If the complaint concerns an allegation of serious abuse in the part of staff for which there is, or likely to be evidence, the member of staff who is accused may be subject to suspension until a full investigation has been made. This will happen as quickly as possible to avoid periods of unnecessary suspension.



2.5 If the complaint concerns any allegation of abuse or failure to protect a child by the Principal, the complaint should be addressed directly to the Designated Teacher for Safe-guarding – at the school address – who will immediately inform the Chair of Governors. The complaint may also be made directly to the Chair of Governors, Mr P Gray, at the school address. Where the allegation concerns serious abuse, the Principal will be subject to suspension until a full investigation has been made.

2.6 Following the response from the Complaints Committee, the complainant, if uncertain about the outcome may appeal to the Appeals' Sub-Committee.

2.7 The Appeals Sub-Committee will review the complaint and all the evidence and respond in writing.

2.8 The aim at each stage is to be fair, consistent, accurate and compassionate towards pupils, parents and staff with the safety and good of all in mind.

3. COMPLAINT IN WRITING TO EDUCATION AUTHORITY

3.1 If the complaint is not progressing, or has not been resolved to the parent/complainant's satisfaction then the complaint should be notified in writing to the Education Authority, Ballee Centre, Ballymena.

4. COMPLAINT TO THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN

4.1 All parents have the right to contact the Public Services Ombudsman if they feel that their complaint has not been addressed in the proper manner, if they feel they have been treated unfairly, have received poor service from the school or that the complaint has not been resolved fairly. The Ombudsman will ensure firstly that the procedure has been properly followed and that the school and/or The Board of Governors has had opportunity to resolve matters. After this has happened, the Ombudsman may consider the detail of the complaint and the outcomes. (NB time-frames will be set out and may be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods).

4.2 The Ombudsman provides a free independent and impartial service for handling complaints about schools in Northern Ireland. A complaint should be made to NIPSO within six months of the final response from the school. The school will advise in its documentation that the complaint may be referred to the NIPSO if the parent remains dissatisfied. It is reassuring to all sides that the ombudsman is neutral, fair and thorough in reviewing all documentation and evidence.

Contact Details for NIPSO:

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
BELFAST
BT1 6HN



DUNCLUG COLLEGE

AD VITAM PARAMUS

Freepost: FREEPOST NIPSO
Telephone: 02890 233821
Freephone: 0800 343424
Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk
Web: www.nipso.org.uk

The key is to ensure that the school is a safe and purposeful environment in which children can thrive and learn. It is important to listen in a respectful manner to all complaints and perceptions of complaint. Our joint purpose must be for the good of the pupil or pupils concerned. Every child is of equal status and his/her well-being is paramount, but there must also be awareness of the needs of others and the understanding that decisions made in respect of an individual may affect the experience and well-being of others, and the greater good.

The Principal would assure all parents of their desire to listen genuinely to all complaints whether minor or more serious, and to be fair and reasonable in response and to seek resolution always with the child's best interest at heart.