

# GOOD SHEPHERD PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL



*LEARN, BELIEVE, RESPECT ACHIEVE!*

## Concerns and Complaints Policy



*Mrs M Harley  
January 2020*

# **GOOD SHEPHERD PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL**

## **CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **Policy Statement**

At Good Shepherd Primary and Nursery School we are committed to listening about our service. We will use this information, wherever possible, to help maintain and improve our service. We encourage and welcome all comments and views, both positive and negative. Comments, concerns and complaints can be verbal, written, recorded or E-mailed. Our policy, in respect to concerns and complaints, is outlined below.

Our policy aims are best met by ensuring effective communication at the earliest stage possible.

### **Aims**

Our procedures aim to:

- provide an efficient and thorough system through which issues are effectively addressed
- facilitate the school in providing the best possible service for its pupils and the local community
- provide a simple, speedy and accessible service that respects confidentiality
- be courteous and respectful
- address issues arising from concerns or complaints in a fair and honest manner within the timescales set out
- treat individuals and groups with openness, equality and inclusiveness
- keep people informed of progress and the final outcome of the issues raised
- be simple, easily accessible and easy to use.

These procedures do not replace or supplement other established procedures and/or appeals mechanisms in such areas as Child Protection, Special Education, Admissions, Suspensions and Expulsions.

The school will not deal with anonymous complaints and therefore these procedures do not provide for a resolution of anonymous complaints except for the referral of child protection concerns to the appropriate Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines.

## **What to Expect under these Procedures**

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

In dealing with your concern or complaint we will ensure that you receive:

- Fair treatment
- Courtesy
- A timely response
- Accurate advice
- Respect for your privacy - concerns will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility that we may have to consult with others about your complaint
- Reasons for our decisions

Where the complaint is justified we will acknowledge this and address the complaint you have raised. Similarly if, after investigation, it is judged there are no grounds for your complaint, you will be advised accordingly.

### **Your Responsibilities as a person making a complaint**

In raising a concern or complaint we would expect that you:

- Raise issues in a timely manner
- Treat our staff as professionals and in a non-threatening manner with respect and courtesy
- Provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issue you raise
- Use these procedures fully and to engage in them at the appropriate levels

## **Raising a Concern**

### **Stage 1 - Informal - Speaking with the Teacher concerned**

In the first instance, a concern should normally be raised verbally with the teacher concerned. You should arrange a meeting with the teacher to discuss the concern with him/her so that the teacher may be allowed an opportunity to address the issue, as in many instances; these can

arise through a simple misunderstanding. You should observe the school's existing protocols for arranging and conducting such approaches or meetings.

This approach would not prevent you from choosing to enter the process at a later stage if you believed that to be an appropriate course of action.

## **Stage 2 - Informal - Speaking with the Principal**

If your complaint remains unresolved, you should arrange a meeting with the Principal to discuss the issue with him/her. You should let the Principal know in advance the nature of your concerns so that he/she can prepare for the meeting.

If you have concerns relating to the Principal you should arrange a meeting with him/her to discuss the issue. You should let the Principal know in advance the nature of your concerns so that he/she can prepare for the meeting.

In some circumstances, the Principal will not be able to deal effectively with your concerns immediately and he/she will require some time over which to investigate and prepare a proper response. If further time is required, you will be told of this.

## **Raising a Complaint**

## **Stage 3 - Formal - Writing to the Principal**

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to have your concern resolved at source through the informal routes proposed at Stages 1 and 2 or, indeed, it might be more appropriate to initiate the procedures at this stage. Your written complaint should be as concise as possible and address specifically the issue or issues that are of immediate concern to you.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received and either;

- Provide a response to the issues you raised

or

- Indicate that your concerns are being fully investigated and the timeframe - a maximum of 20 working days from the date on which your letter was received - against which you can expect a full response to be issued

#### **Stage 4 - Formal - In writing to Governor Sub-Committee**

If you still believe that your complaint has not been dealt with in a satisfactory manner, or in a case where you decide to raise an issue at this level, you may write to the Chairperson of Board of Governors. The Chairperson will be responsible for bringing your complaint to a Governors' Sub-Committee, which will investigate and respond to your complaint. Your written complaint should be as concise as possible and address specifically the issue or issues that are of immediate concern to you.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received and either;

- Provide a response to the issues you raised

**or**

- Indicate that your concerns are being fully investigated and the timeframe - a maximum of 25 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received - against which you can expect a response to be issued;

**or**

- Indicate a date, time and place for you to attend a meeting with this Sub-Committee at which your concerns will be discussed in full. If this meeting is required, it will take place within 20 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received and you should expect a written response within a further 10 working days of the meeting having been held.

### **Appeals Process – Full Board of Governors**

Subsequently, if you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Board of Governors Sub Committee you may write to the Chairperson of Board of Governors requesting that you be allowed to meet with the full Board of Governors to appeal the outcomes. The Chairperson will be responsible for ensuring that you are invited to the next suitable scheduled meeting of Governors where your appeal will be heard. Your written request should be as concise as possible and set out specifically the grounds for your Appeal.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received and provide you with the date and time of the meeting at which you will have an opportunity to discuss your complaint. This meeting will normally take place within 30 working days of your Appeal request having been received.

Following this meeting, and within 10 working days of that meeting, you should expect a final written response. This will indicate the Governors' findings, their recommendations and the reasons supporting their decisions.

### **Appeals Process – NI Public Service Ombudsman**

Finally, if you are still dissatisfied you may contact the NI Public Service Ombudsman. The Ombudsman provides a free, independent and impartial service for handling complaints about schools in Northern Ireland. A complaint should normally be referred to the NIPSO within six months of the final response from the school. The school will, in its concluding letter to the complainant, inform him/her that the complaint may be referred to the NIPSO if he/she remains dissatisfied about the process or outcome.

### **Record Keeping**

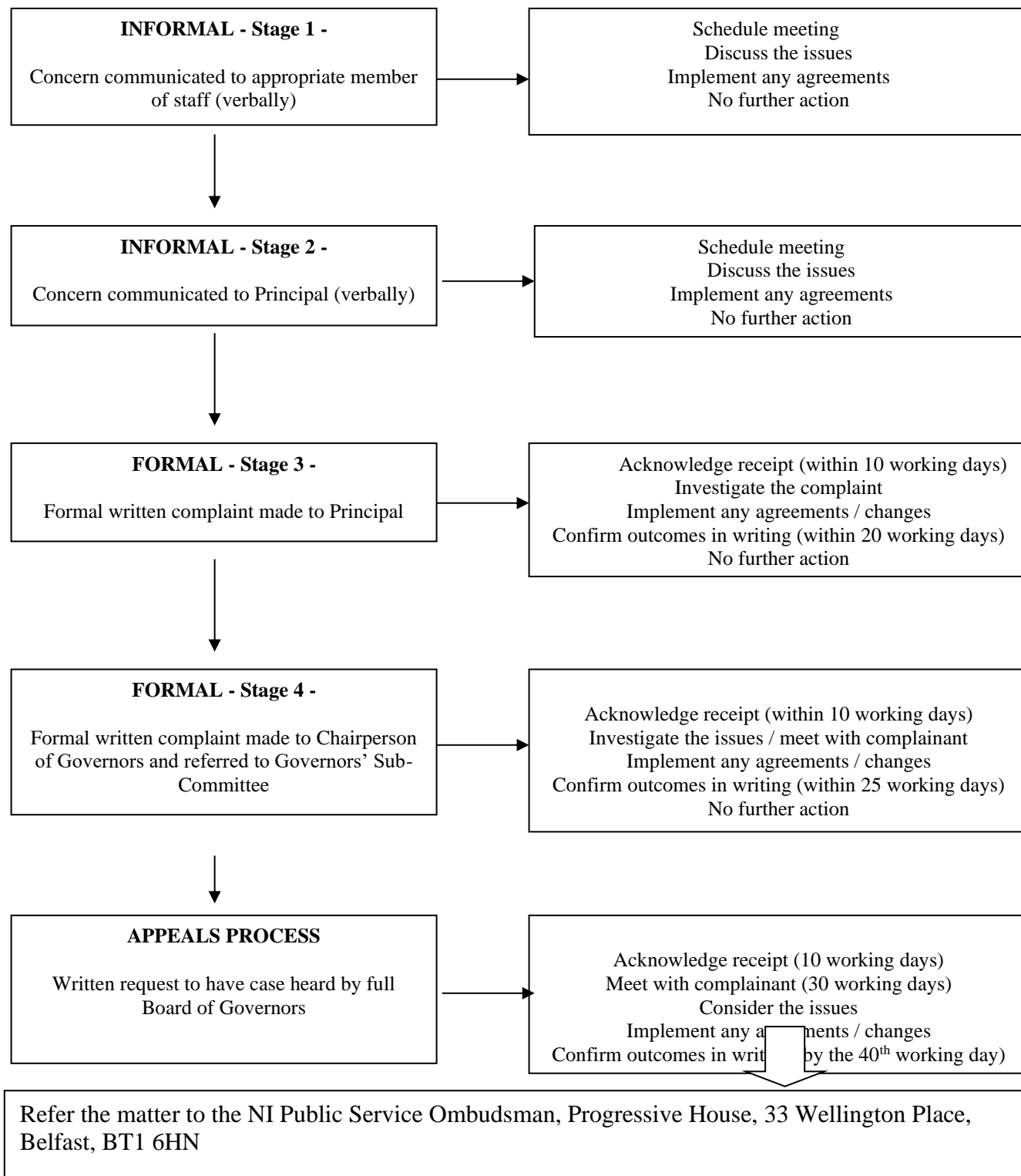
The School Principal shall maintain a record of all correspondence, conversations and meetings concerning your complaint. These records shall be held confidentially in the school and shall be kept apart from pupil records. All such records will be destroyed five years after the date of the last correspondence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

Our responses will be in jargon free language and we will attempt to address all the points and issues raised.

If you do not respond within a reasonable time to the outcome of an investigation into your complaint, we will assume that you are satisfied and do not require us to take further action.

# HANDLING COMPLAINTS IN CATHOLIC MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

## FLOW CHART





## HANDLING COMPLAINTS IN CATHOLIC MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

### SAMPLE LETTERS

**Formal - Stage 3**

**Complaint Made in Writing to Principal - Acknowledgement**

Dear

Thank you for your letter of 1 January 2020 in which you outlined your concerns regarding

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**Option A**

I have investigated the various aspects of your complaint and would respond as follows

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or

**Option B**

I hope that you will appreciate that I need some time in order to investigate your concerns to respond as fully as possible to the issues you have raised. I will be writing more fully to you within the next 10 working days.

or

**Option C**

It would be extremely helpful if you could contact the school in order to arrange a suitable time for a meeting to discuss your complaint. This will help me to fully investigate your concerns and to respond as fully as possible to the issues you have raised. I will be writing more fully to you within 10 working days of that meeting.

Yours sincerely

**Principal**

January 2020

**Formal Stage 3**

**Complaint Made in Writing to Principal – Response Following Meeting**

Dear

Thank you for attending our meeting on 15 January 2020 in which we discussed your concerns regarding

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Following that meeting and my own investigations into the various aspects of your complaint, I would respond as follows:

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Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention and to assure you that the school always welcomes your contribution.

Yours sincerely

**Principal**

January 2020

**Formal - Stage 4**

**Complaint Made in Writing to Chairperson of Governors - Acknowledgement**

Dear

Thank you for your letter of 1 January 2020 in which you outlined your concerns regarding

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I have referred your complaint to a Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors for investigation and response to the various aspects of your complaint.

**Option A**

I hope that you will appreciate that the Sub-Committee will need some time in order to investigate your concerns to respond as fully as possible to the issues you have raised. The Sub-Committee will be writing more fully to you within the next 25 working days.

Or

**Option B**

I hope that you will appreciate that the Sub-Committee will need some time in order to investigate your concerns. Indeed, it would be extremely helpful if you could attend a meeting of the Sub-Committee to discuss your complaint on 15 January 2020 at 6.30pm in School. This will help the Sub-Committee to properly investigate your concerns and to respond as fully as possible to the issues you have raised. The Sub-Committee will be writing more fully within 10 working days of that meeting.

Yours sincerely

**Chairperson of the Board of Governors**

January 2020

**Formal - Stage 4**

**Outcome of Sub-Committee Investigation / Meeting**

Dear

**OPTION A - No Meeting Needed**

Thank you for your letter of 15 January 2020 in which you outlined your concerns regarding

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I have investigated the various aspects of your complaint and would respond as follows

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**OPTION B - Meeting with Sub-Committee**

Thank you for attending our meeting on 15 January 2003 in which we discussed your concerns regarding

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Following that meeting and the Sub-Committee's own investigations into the various aspects of your complaint, I would respond as follows

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January 2020

## **Both Options**

Our reasons for coming to our decision are

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Finally, on behalf of the *Governors' Sub-Committee*, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for bringing your concerns to our attention and to assure you that the school continues to welcome your contribution.

Yours sincerely

**Chairperson of the Governor Sub-Committee for Complaints**

## **Appeal**

### **Request to Appeal - Acknowledgement**

Dear

Thank you for your letter of 1 January 2020 in which you set out the grounds for appealing the previous outcomes to your complaint regarding

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I have referred your complaint to the Board of Governors for them to investigate and respond to the various aspects of your complaint. To this end I have arranged for your case to be considered at the next meeting of the board of Governors, which takes place on 15 January 2020 at 6.30pm in Good Shepherd Primary and Nursery School. You should attend this meeting so that you can have an opportunity to put forward your case in detail.

This will help the Board of Governors to consider all aspects of your concerns and then to respond as fully as possible to the issues you have raised. You will receive a full written response within 10 working days of that meeting.

Yours sincerely

**Chairperson of the Board of Governors**

January 2020

**Appeal**

**Outcome of Full Board of Governor Meeting**

Dear

Thank you for attending the Board of Governor meeting on 15 January 2020 in which you outlined your concerns in respect of

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Following that meeting and our own investigations into the various aspects of your complaint, I would respond as follows

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Our reasons for coming to our decision are

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In relation to the general handling of your complaint I would comment as follows

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Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for bringing your concerns to our attention and to assure you that the Board of Governors and school staff continue to welcome your contribution to school life.

Yours sincerely

**Chairperson of the Board of Governors**

January 2020



## **Discourteous or Threatening Behaviour Towards a Member of Staff**

Dear

I have been informed of a regrettable incident when you attended the school on 1 January 2020 to discuss your concerns with a member of staff.

Whilst I understand that that your visit was prompted by a perceived complaint in relation to the member of staff with whom you spoke, I regret that I must insist that you do not re-enter school premises for any reason without first contacting the school principal to arrange your visit. This decision has been taken so as to protect the pupils and staff in the school and to avoid the potential for a further similar incident, which could have other more serious consequences.

In the meantime, I would encourage you to read the enclosed school's Complaints Procedure in relation to your original issue.

Yours sincerely

**Chairperson of the Board of Governors**

January 2020

