

# ***ENNISKILLEN NURSERY SCHOOL***

## ***Comments / Complaints Policy***

We in Enniskillen Nursery School seek to be a ‘listening school’ and we do our best to enable parents/guardians to feel confident to raise issues and concerns with appropriate staff.

- Comments/Complaints will be considered following a clear set of procedures. These procedures will be made clear to any parent/guardian or member of the public making a complaint.
- A school will try to resolve a parent’s/guardian’s concern as informally and quickly as possible and always make clear what action, if any, is being taken.
- The Board of Governors will consider complaints through the Complaints Committee where it has been impossible to resolve them at school management level.
- Individual complaints will not be discussed by the full Board of Governors.
- If a complaint is brought to the attention of an individual member of the Board of Governors, s/he should make sure that the complaint is dealt with under the correct complaints procedure adopted by the school.

### **1 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**1.1** A **customer** is the term used to define those who avail of school services and support.

**1.2** The **customer base** of the school is defined as follows:

- Parents/guardians
- Pupils
- Teachers
- Support Staff
- All other relevant agencies

**1.3** A **comment** is a statement on the part of the customer, either verbal or written, which:

- tells the staff when they are doing things right;
- cannot be described as a complaint under the definition in 1.4 below.

**1.4** A **complaint** is:

- an expression of dissatisfaction which requires a response or may lead to investigation;
- a perceived injustice/failure of reasonable expectations on the part of the customer about a specific issue(s).

**1.5** A **comment/complaint** may be verbal, written or emailed.

- 1.6** All **anonymous complaints** will be treated as comments on the basis that the school has no recourse to a complainant. However, if the comment has potential implications for future criminal investigations relating to the individual concerned, the Principal and the Board of Governors will take appropriate action which may involve the Board and/or other bodies.

There are already formal/statutory appeal procedures in place to address customer grievances in many areas of the Western Education and Library Board's responsibilities. The Board has a statutory duty, where relevant, to inform its customers of the existence of those procedures. The Comments/Complaints Policy does not affect those rights.

## **2 PRINCIPLES**

This Comments/Complaints Policy aims to:

- facilitate the school in the pursuance of its commitment to provide services to the highest standards;
- reflect the values associated in the aims and objectives of the school as outlined in the school prospectus;
- be simple, speedy, accessible and respect confidentiality;
- be courteous;
- treat individuals and groups with openness and honesty;
- identify and respond to the needs of their customers;
- provide a mechanism within which any issue identified by customers can be quickly and effectively addressed;
- ensure that parents/guardians, staff and governors know a Comments/Complaints Policy is in place.

## **3 PURPOSES**

To:

- address all issues arising from a complaint in a fair and confidential manner within the time-scales set out in the Policy;
- inform the complainant of progress and the final outcome of the complaint investigation;
- enhance customer confidence and satisfaction;
- provide guidance and protection for staff, parents/guardians and members of the public.

## **4 PRACTICES/PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS**

### **4.1 Time-frame for dealing with complaints:**

- acknowledge complaints within 5 working days. In the event of a complaint not being acknowledged within the time-scale the Principal will investigate the particular circumstances relating to the delay.
- respond to complaint within 3 weeks of acknowledgement (15 working days). If this is not possible the complainant should be informed as to when a response will be forthcoming;
- written complaint to Principal acknowledged within 5 working days and response normally within 10 working days;
- written complaint to Chairperson of the Board of Governors acknowledged within 5 working days;
- complaint heard by Board of Governors' Complaints Sub-Committee within 10 working days and written decisions of the Board of Governors' Complaints Sub-Committee sent to Principal and complainant within 5 days of the meeting;
- further representation can be made to the Board if deemed necessary.

### **4.2 Who deals with Comments/Complaints?**

- A formal complaint should be made in the first instance to the Principal. The Chairperson of the Board of Governors should be the first person to approach only in cases that could involve disciplinary or legal action against the Principal.
- Governors approached by a complainant should refer him/her to the Principal or the Chairperson as indicated above.

### **4.3 Responding to a Comment/Complaint**

- Written replies will be in jargon-free language.
- All points and issues raised in a complaint will be addressed.

If the Principal does not hear from the complainant within 3 weeks (15 days) of the date of the issue of the letter the matter will then be deemed closed.

### **4.4 Complaints Involving Other Agencies**

A complaint may involve the school and one or more agencies. If the school, as the lead body, subsequently identifies that the complaint is the responsibility of the agency, the complaint will be formally transferred to that body and the school will undertake to inform the complainant.

### **4.5 Complaints relating to Child Protection**

The school acknowledges its responsibility, under the Children (NI) Order 1995, to work in partnership with other statutory agencies to promote and safeguard the welfare of children. This partnership is facilitated by the Board's Child Protection Service.

When the school receives a complaint/concern, which may be a Child Protection issue, that complaint/concern will be dealt with under the school's Child Protection Policy. Depending on the nature of the complaint, it may be passed to the Board's designated officer who will decide on the appropriate course of action. Such complaints/concerns will be dealt with in accordance with the guidance issued by the Western Area Child Protection Committee (1998) and the Department of Education (1999).

#### **4 ACCESS TO THE POLICY**

- The Policy is available in the school on request.
- The school has a system for recording all comments/complaints.

##### **5.1 Monitoring the Policy**

The Principal will monitor complaints received and report to the Board of Governors on an annual basis on the implementation of policy and procedures. This will give details of:

- the number and types of complaints
- the average time taken to respond;
- the number of satisfied customers.

##### **5.2 Confidentiality**

All concerns and complaints will be treated with discretion. It is vital that parents/guardians feel confident that their complaint will not penalise their child. However, a complainant will need to be aware that some information will have to be shared with those involved in order that the complaint can be investigated.

#### **6 WHY WE LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU**

Comments/complaints are useful to the school because they allow it to monitor, evaluate and review its service in pursuit of continuous improvement.

This policy will be subject to review on an annual basis.

##### **6.1 UNRESOLVED COMPLAINTS**

If the complaint has not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction by the Board of Governors, the complaint can be referred to the Western Education and Library Board.

If a complainant remains dissatisfied s/he can complain to the Commissioner for Complaints at:

***Office of the Ombudsman  
Progressive House  
33 Wellington Place  
BELFAST  
BT1 6HN***

The Commissioner for Complaints is independent and investigates complaints of mal-administration against public bodies. The Commissioner will normally expect complainants to have made full use of the procedures set out in the school's Comments/Complaints Policy before carrying out any investigation.

# **Complaints Procedure**

## ***Procedures for parents to follow if they have a Complaint***

At the first parent meeting and subsequent meetings, it is emphasised that this school has an ethos of partnership, partnership between children, staff and parents. If any of the partners in this relationship has a concern it is hoped they will be able to share their concern. They will subsequently have it listened to and some action will be agreed upon.

## ***If the parent has a concern the following are the procedures to follow.***

- The parent should approach the teacher in the room either at the start or finish of the session to discuss their concern.
- If the parent would rather have time with the teacher in a quiet place then an appointment can be arranged by phoning or approaching the teacher in their classroom.
- After this meeting it is hoped that having shared the concern with the teacher and action being agreed, the parent will be satisfied.
- If having met with the teacher the parent is not satisfied, they should then approach the Principal to arrange a further meeting.
- If after meeting with the Principal the parent is still not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken regarding the concern, then the parent should approach the Board of Governors.
- A more formal approach can be made by writing to the Chairman of the Board of Governors (c/o the school). The Principal will take the complaint to the next Board of Governors meeting.
- If the parent feels the complaint has not been dealt with appropriately then they may approach the WELB, 1 Hospital Road, Omagh, BT79 0AW.

## Procedure for Reporting a Parent Complaint

