



**RSD**

ROYAL SCHOOL  
DUNGANNON

**PARENTAL COMPLAINTS  
PROCEDURE**

**FOR**

**ROYAL SCHOOL DUNGANNON**

## THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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# **THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

## **ROYAL SCHOOL DUNGANNON**

### **1. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

The Board of Governors, together with the Headmaster, set the direction and tone of the School in all that they do and are committed to working with parents in the best interests of their children's education. The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to address complaints raised by parents/guardians.

- 1.1** The procedure covers all matters relating to the actions of staff employed in the School and the application of School procedures, where they affect individual pupils. However, the School staff and the Board of Governors recognise the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest possible stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.
- 1.2** Where it becomes evident at an early stage that a matter should be dealt with according to other established procedures or appeals mechanisms, this Complaints Procedure will be set aside in favour of the agreed procedure such as Child Protection, Special Education, Admissions, Suspensions and Expulsions, Grievance, Discipline, Bullying and Harassment or the Unsatisfactory Teaching Procedure.
- 1.3** The School will not investigate anonymous complaints, unless deemed by the School to be of a serious nature. Anonymous complaints may be investigated where they relate to alleged Child Protection matters or alleged financial impropriety. This will be at the discretion of the School.

### **2. AIMS**

- 2.1** In operating this Complaints Procedure, we aim to:
  - encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
  - allow swift handling of a complaint within established time-limits for action;
  - keep people informed of progress;
  - ensure a full and fair investigation;
  - have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved;
  - respect confidentiality;
  - fully address all aspects of a complaint and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary; and
  - in the interest of continuous improvement, provide relevant information to the School's Senior Leadership Team and Board of Governors.
- 2.2** This Procedure is designed to be:
  - easily accessible and publicised;
  - simple to understand and use;
  - impartial; and
  - non-adversarial.

A copy of this Procedure is available on the School's website or is available from the School on request.

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

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

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

- fair treatment;
- courtesy;
- a timely response;
- accurate advice;
- respect for your privacy – complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility that we may have to consult with other appropriate parties about your complaint; and
- reasons for our decisions.

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

#### **3.2 Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint**

In making your complaint, we would expect that you:

- raise issues in a timely manner;
- treat our staff with respect and courtesy;
- provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues you raise; and
- use these procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels.

#### **3.3 Rights of parties involved during the investigation**

The process is non-adversarial and does not provide a role for any other statutory or non-statutory body.

##### **Complainant**

Where a meeting is arranged the complainant may be accompanied by another person where it is accepted, by the Board of Governors and the Headmaster, that this will assist the investigation and resolution of the complaint.

##### **Staff**

Staff may seek the advice and support from their professional body or Trade Union and may also be accompanied by another person to meetings where it is accepted, by the Board of Governors and the Headmaster, that this will assist the investigation and resolution of the complaint.

A member of staff who is the subject of a complaint will be provided with full details of any allegations made against him/her before being required to respond to the matters raised. In many occasions this may be best achieved by providing the member of staff with a copy of the letter. However, the views of the complainant will be sought before doing so.

##### **Legal Representation**

Legal representation, or representation by a person, or persons acting in a professional capacity **is not** permitted within this Procedure.

This Procedure does not take away from the statutory rights of any of the participants.

### 3.4 Where the complainant is a Governor

Where the complainant is a member of the Board of Governors, s/he will play no part in the management, or appeal, of the complaint as set out in this Procedure.

### 3.5 Time Frames

**Stage One** – Normally acknowledge as soon as possible but at least within 10 school working days, with final response normally provided within 20 school working days

**Stage Two** – Normally acknowledge as soon as possible but at least within 10 school working days, with final response normally provided within 20 school working days

If, for any reason, the consideration / review of a complaint takes longer to complete, complainants 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.

## 4. MAKING A COMPLAINT

### 4.1 Informal Stage – Speaking with Teacher

In the first instance, a complaint should normally be raised verbally with the teacher concerned, so that s/he may have an opportunity to address the issue(s). **Please observe the School's existing protocols for arranging and conducting such meetings and follow the School's policy with respect to access to members of staff.**

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

### 4.2 Formal Stages

Stage One – Write to the Headmaster

Stage Two – Write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors

#### 4.2.1 Time Limit

To enable complaints to be resolved in a timely manner, please contact the School as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered within **6 months of the date of the incident(s)** about which you are complaining.

#### 4.2.2 Stage One – Write to the Headmaster

When making a complaint, contact the Headmaster who will arrange for the complaint to be investigated. **If the complaint is about the Headmaster, 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.

When writing your complaint, please provide clear information and include the following:

- Your name and contact details;
- What your complaint is about – please try to be specific;
- What you have already done to try to resolve it; and

- What you would like the School to do to resolve your complaint.

The Headmaster will normally acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible, but within 10 school working days from the date on which your letter was received. This will be a short response and you will be sent a copy of, (or a link to) the School's complaints procedure. This response may invite you to attend a meeting with the Headmaster in order to discuss the circumstances of the complaint in full. The Headmaster will then proceed to investigate the complaint.

After an investigation of the complaint has been conducted, a final response will normally be made within 20 school working days of receipt of the complaint. This response will be issued in writing and will indicate with reasons whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. If, for any reason, the consideration 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.

If you remain unhappy with the outcome at Stage One, the complaint may be progressed to Stage Two, which is overseen by the Board of Governors.

#### **4.2.3 Stage Two – Write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors**

If your complaint is about the Headmaster or if the complaint is unresolved after Stage One, write to the chairperson of the board of governors. Where this may present difficulties, please contact the School which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process. The letter can be left at the School office and marked 'private and confidential'. The chairperson will convene a committee to consider the complaint.

In the case of the complaint being about the Headmaster, this committee will investigate the complaint.

Please provide clear information and include the following:

- Reason(s) why you disagree with the stage one findings
- Any aspect in which you think that the School's complaints procedure was not fully followed

The chairperson of the committee will normally acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible but at least within 10 school working days. A final response will normally be made within 20 school working days from date of receipt of the second letter. The response will be issued by the chairperson of the committee and will indicate, with reasons, whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

If, for any reason, the review of a complaint takes longer to complete, complainants 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.

#### **4.3 The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) – [www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk)**

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 provided below.

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)

## 5. RECORD KEEPING

The Headmaster and Chairman of the Board of Governors will maintain a record of all correspondence, conversations and meetings, concerning your complaint. These records will be held confidentially in the School and will be kept apart from pupil records. All such records will be destroyed **three years after the date of the last correspondence on the issue.**

## 6. FRIVOLOUS OR VEXATIOUS 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 has been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied. The School must balance the rights of an individual to make a complaint and have it fairly investigated with the rights of staff not to be subjected to unacceptable actions or behaviour.

Any decision to treat a complaint as unreasonable must take into account the need to ensure that the complaints procedure is being fairly applied and every attempt has been made to communicate and address concerns about behaviour/conduct with the complainant. In the event that such a decision has been taken, the complainant will be advised accordingly.

Where the Board of Governors considers the actions of a parent/group of parents to constitute a frivolous or vexatious complaint, it will seek legal advice in order to protect staff from further such actions.