



# **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

Reviewed March 2025

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## 1. FOREWORD

This policy replaces the school complaints policy of 2022.

At Botanic Primary we aim to provide a positive, supportive and stimulating environment where each child feels valued, respected and nurtured. All are encouraged to achieve their full potential. Additional help is available for children with learning difficulties. Staff expertise is used to provide specialised teaching in PE, Art and Music. A wide range of extra-curricular activities develop the children's personal interests and skills.

### Ethos

At Botanic Primary we aim to provide a positive, supportive and stimulating environment for all our children.

**We aim to provide an environment where children are:**

- **Encouraged**
- **Seen**
- **Valued**

#### **Children are encouraged**

We wholeheartedly encourage children to take pride and put forth their best efforts in everything they do. We believe that when students strive to do their best, they not only achieve success, but also contribute positively to our school community and their wider community in the long term.

#### **Children are seen**

We see the children for their strengths, personal qualities and individuality. We notice and celebrate their achievements, not only with learning but also with personal growth (no matter how small something may seem). Every child's accomplishments matter - we ensure that our recognition is diverse and inclusive. By recognising both academic and personal achievements, we inspire our students to reach their full potential and become well-rounded individuals

#### **Children are valued**

Botanic PS can be described as 'naturally integrated' with our school community representing a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. **We foster a welcoming ethos where everyone is valued. Mutual respect is paramount at all levels of our school community. Botanic Primary is a 'Controlled School.'**

### Mission Statement

With our school ethos at heart, it is our aim at Botanic Primary that our children:

- **Delight in effort**
- **Delight in achievement**
- **Delight in respect**

Pastoral Care in Botanic Primary School is a priority. It is acknowledged as playing a crucial role in the development of the ethos of the school. This ethos reflects the values outlined in our mission statement with emphasis on the development of each child to his or her full potential. The Pastoral Care Policy supports the school in promoting a caring, supportive environment in which staff and pupils can work in an atmosphere of mutual respect. It is this respect – at all levels that permeates our school and makes it truly special. All members of the school community are required to acknowledge and promote respect.

You can contact a teacher by ringing (02890 328346), emailing ([kgordon662@botanic.belfast.ni.sch.uk](mailto:kgordon662@botanic.belfast.ni.sch.uk)) or writing (Botanic PS, 6 Botanic Court, Belfast BT7 1QY) to the school secretary or receptionist and asking to make an appointment. Please note that any appointment would need to be outside teaching hours.

*Here at Botanic Primary School we take complaints very seriously. We have the best interests of all 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.*

*If you have any issues please talk to the teacher as soon as possible. Concerns about matters other than in the classroom should be raised with the Principal (or SENCO if it is about a Special Educational Needs matter). We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.*

## **2. AIMS**

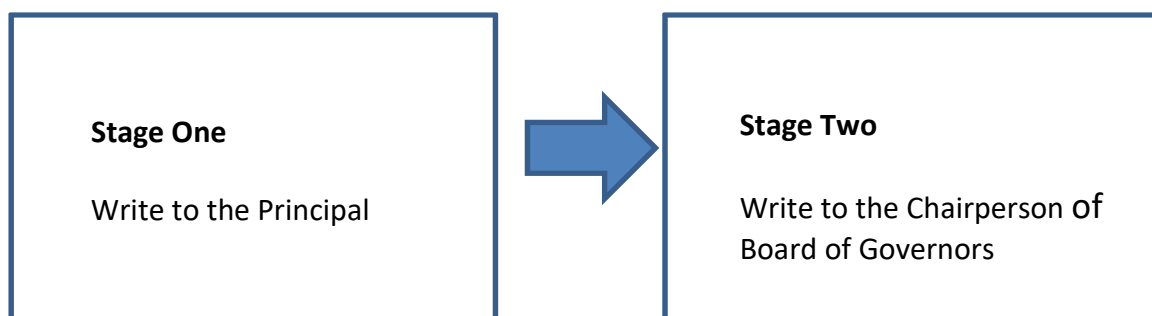
When dealing with complaints the school will:

- encourage resolution of all concerns as quickly as possible
- provide timely responses to concerns and complaints
- keep you informed of progress

- ensure a full and fair investigation of your complaint where appropriate
- have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved
- respect confidentiality
- fully address complaints and provide an effective response
- take appropriate action to rectify the issue and prevent it happening again where appropriate
- be responsive to learning from outcomes which will inform and improve practice within the school.

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

### 3. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE –AT A GLANCE



#### **Time Limit**

Please contact the school as soon as possible; unless there are exceptional circumstances complaints will normally only be considered with regard to matters arising in the previous 6 months.

#### **Stage One**

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. *(see guidance notes for further information)*

Please provide as much information as possible including:

- name and contact details
- what the complaint is about
- what has already been done to try to resolve it and
- 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 will need to be reviewed if complaints are 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 Two**

If the complaint is unresolved after Stage One, write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors *(care of 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 Chairperson will convene a committee to review the complaint. Please provide as much detail as possible as indicated above.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 school working days and a final

response normally made within 20 school 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 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:

#### **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)

#### 4. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS 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 examples of complaints dealt with:***

- not following school policy
- communication delays / lack of communication
- difficulties in staff / pupil relationships.

#### **4.2 Complaints with separate 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.***

<b>Exceptions</b>	<b>Contact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school</li></ul>	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Operations and Estates Donna Allen (Interim Director)
<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 Elaine Craig (Interim Assistant Director)
<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 Cynthia Currie
<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 Dale Hannah

**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. *(see guidance notes for further information)*

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

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

In dealing with complaint 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 Procedure does not take away from the 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**

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 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.