



## Handling Complaints Procedure

Our Lady's Primary School takes 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, parents/guardians and other stakeholders is vital to the effective management of the school. Therefore we would encourage you to bring your concerns to us and we will aim to resolve them. In the first instance contact should be made with the class teacher. If the matter remains unresolved then an appointment can be made to meet with the Vice-Principal or Principal.

When dealing with complaints we aim to:

- 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 your complaint 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.

### Complaints Procedure – At a glance



**Time Limit:** To help us resolve your complaint, please contact us as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, we will only consider a complaint within 6 months of origin of the complaint with the school.

**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. However, where this is not possible the school will make reasonable arrangements to support you.

Please provide as much information as possible including:

- Your name and contact details;
- What the complaint is about;
- What has already been done to try to resolve it;
- What you would like the school to do.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 10 school working days and a response normally made within 20 school working days of receipt of the complaint.

These time frames may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.

If you are unhappy with the outcome at Stage 1, your 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'*), who will convene a sub-committee to review the complaint. Please provide as much detail as possible as indicated above.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 10 school working days and a final response normally made within 20 school working days from date of receipt of the complaint.

These time frames 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)

**A full copy of the school's Handling Complaints Procedure Policy is available from the school on request.**