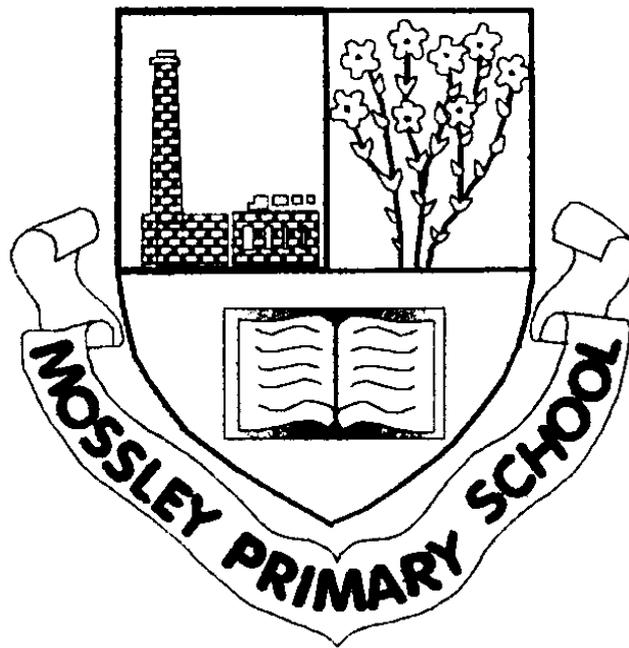


Mossley Primary School



Complaints Procedure

Complaints Procedure

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1. Foreword

As a school we aim to provide, in partnership with parents, a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment where children can achieve their full potential and pursue excellence.

In Mossley Primary School we have an ambitious vision to do our utmost for our children. We serve them through the ethos we create, the environment we maintain and the standards we expect. We continuously seek to raise the bar and narrow the gap between the potential and attainment of all our children. In so doing we demonstrate that every child counts, that everyone has a part to play in our school community and everyone plays their part.

As a school we are constantly reflecting on all that we do and value your input through questionnaires etc.

We take all concerns very seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible. 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 quickly and effectively, leaving no unnecessary dissatisfaction.

To this end we operate an open-door policy and should you ever have any concerns of a classroom nature please contact your child's teacher. Teachers may be available at drop off and pick up times, however it may be much more beneficial to arrange a time that suits both you and the teacher.

In addition, the Co-Principals are more than happy for you to 'pop' into the office at any time should you have any concerns about any aspect of the school. If they are unavailable at that time they will arrange a time that is mutually convenient.

Obviously, it is our aim to resolve any concerns which have been raised. Should there be concerns which you feel are unresolved and you wish to make a complaint please follow the procedures outlined in this policy.

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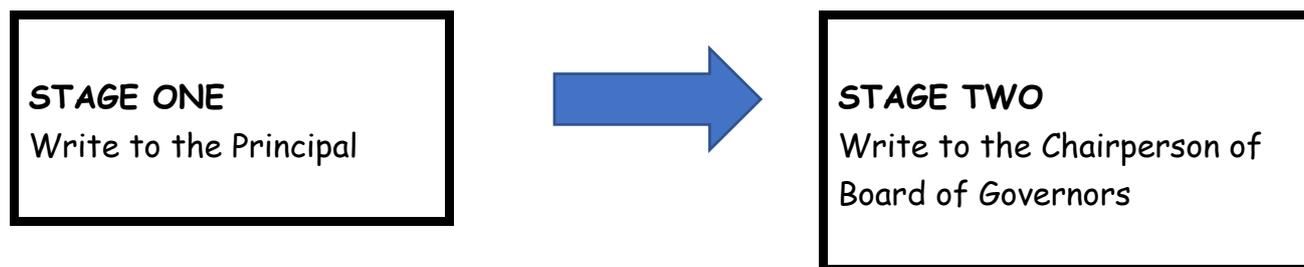
2. AIMS OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE:

When dealing with complaints our school aims to:

- Encourage resolution of all concerns as quickly as possible.
- Provide timely responses to concerns and complaints.
- Keep complainants informed of progress.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation of your complaint.
- 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.
- Be responsive to learning from outcomes which will inform and improve practice within the school.
- Provide a process that is simple to understand and use.
- Be impartial.
- Be non-adversarial.

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 be considered within 6 months of the date of the incident(s) about which you are complaining.

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 10 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 may 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 about the Principal or 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. Please provide clear information including reasons why you disagree with Stage 1 findings and any aspect you think the School's Complaints Procedure was not followed.

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

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 10 working days and a final response normally made within 20 school working days from the date of receipt of the 2nd letter. The response will be issued in writing by the Chairperson of the committee and will indicate with reasons with comments, whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.

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

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).

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: 028 90233821

Freephone: 0800343424

e-mail: nipso@nipso.org.uk

Web: 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.

Exceptions	Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admissions/Expulsions/Exclusion of children from school	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Operations and Estates
Statutory assessments of Special Education Needs (SEN)	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Children and Young People's Services
School Development Proposals	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Education
Child Protection/Safeguarding	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Children and Young People's Services

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 THE PROCEDURE

5.1 Your rights as a person making a complaint:

In dealing with the 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.
- 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.

Complainant: - should be informed that they may be accompanied but not represented by another person during the process e.g. spouse, friend, family member or interpreter, provided this person is not offering legal representation or acting in an official capacity.

If the complainant feels unable to speak on their own behalf, they may avail of support from outside agencies as agreed with the school. (*Local MLAs / Councillors / Citizens' Advice Bureau / Parenting NI / Children's commissioner*)

Staff Members: - should be informed that they may be accompanied or represented by another person during the process e.g. union representative, colleague¹

¹ For information on workers' statutory rights to be accompanied, this should be read in accordance with Section 3 of the LRA's Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures (Paras 110-116).

Pupils: permission should be sought from parents / guardians and parent, guardian or other nominated adult should accompany pupils.

It may be appropriate to seek a written statement if a person is unable to meet for any reason.

Parties should normally be informed when a complaint is made against them and be able to see relevant correspondence.

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 10 school working days, response normally within 20 school working days.

Stage 2 - Normally acknowledge within 10 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.

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 complainant 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.