



Complaints Procedure

for

Cedar Integrated Primary School and Nursery Unit



Version	Ratified by BoG	Summary of Changes
1.0	June 2017	
2.0	January 2021	
3.0	May 2023	Advice received from the NI Public Services Ombudsman- Case Digest 02/23.
4.0	June 2025	Inclusion of Stage 1 and Stage 2 Forms
	Policy review date : June 2028	

The Complaints Procedure

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1. Introduction

1.1 School Information

At Cedar Integrated Primary School and Nursery Unit, we take complaints very seriously. As an integrated school, our staff value the close relationship with parents and carers and we want the very best for every child in our care.

Cedar has always had an open-door policy for parents and this is always stressed at our Welcome Meetings at the beginning of each academic year. 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, thus reducing the potential for 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/carers and other stakeholders is vital to establishing and managing effective and purposeful working relationships between school and home. Class teachers can be easily contacted by email during the school day.

Cedar's Mission Statement

Our children will be

- C** Confident individuals
- E** Effective contributors
- D** Diverse learners
- A** Aspirational thinkers
- R** Respectful citizens

We value our strong links with

- I** Individuals
- P** Parents
- S** Society

#ReadytotakeontheDigitalWorld

1.2 Communication Channels

We welcome open communication with our staff- parents / carers can speak to staff at:

- Welcome Meetings
- Parent Teacher meetings
- Additional meetings can be arranged before or after school
- Teachers reply to phone calls, notes and emails
- School phone number - 02844830009
- Nursery phone number- 02844832500
- Email: kchambers411@c2kni.net
- Principal's email: hcrichon679@c2kni.net

If you have a concern about your child, you should raise it by talking to the teacher as soon as possible. If your concern is related to a matter other than in the classroom, you should speak to the Principal. We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

2. Scope of the Complaints Procedure

A complaint is described as an expression of dissatisfaction with our work.

Some examples of complaints dealt with:

- Not following school policy
- Communication delays / lack of communication
- Difficulties in staff / pupil relationships

2.1 Complaints with Established Procedures

Our school Complaints Procedure sets out how any expression of dissatisfaction relating to the school will be managed. By taking complaints seriously at the earliest possible stage, it is hoped that they can be resolved quickly and effectively.

This procedure should not be used for complaints with separate established procedures; however if your complaint relates to the school's failure to correctly administer any of these procedures, then you may complain by means of this procedure.

Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms, which are not part of the schools complaints procedure, are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. The

principal/ chair of governors will advise on the appropriate procedure to use when a complaint is raised.

Exceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school▪ Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)▪ School Development Proposals▪ Child Protection / Safeguarding

2.2 Anonymous Complaints

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints, unless deemed by the chairperson of the board of governors to be of a very serious nature. The decision of dealing with such complaints will be at the discretion of the chairperson of the board of governors and a specially convened sub-committee.

3. Aims of the Complaints Procedure

3.1 When dealing with Complaints

Our school aims to:

- Encourage resolution as quickly as possible;
- Provide timely responses by staying within the time frames outlined;
- 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 that will inform and improve practice within the school.
- Provide a process that is simple to understand and use;
- be impartial;
- be non-adversarial.

3.2 Availability of Procedure

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

4. Complaints Procedure - At a Glance



4.1 Time Limit

To enable complaints to be resolved, 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 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 and using the Complaint Form for Stage 1 provided on pages 12 -13. 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 the complaint is about - please try to be specific
- What you have already done and what the school has already put in place to try to resolve it and
- What you would like the school to do to resolve the complaint

The principal will normally acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible but within 10 school working days. This will be a short response and you will be sent a copy of, (or a link to) the school's complaints procedure. 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 a sub-committee within the board of governors.

4.3 Stage Two

If your complaint is about the principal or if the complaint is unresolved after Stage One, write to the chairperson of the board of governors using the Complaint Form for Stage 2 provided on pages 14 -15. 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 principal, 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.

4.4 Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) 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

Web: www.nipso.org.uk

5. What To Expect Under This Procedure

5.1 Your rights as a person making a complaint

In dealing with complaints we will ensure:

- Fair treatment;
- Courtesy;
- A timely response keeping within advised time frames outlined;
- 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

When making a complaint it is important 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 raised
- Use these procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels
- Practise confidentiality in matters relating to the complaint

5.3 Rights of parties involved during the investigation

Where a meeting is arranged parties 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

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

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.

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).

5.5 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.

5.6 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 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 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.

5.7 Complaints Process

The Principal and Chair of the Board of Governors will use EA's Guidance on using the School Complaints Procedure for reference.

Cedar Integrated Primary School and Nursery Unit

Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 Form

Stage 2 Form



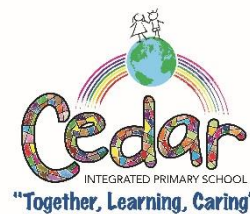
Your Name:	
Pupil's Name (if relevant):	

Complaint Form – Stage One

Please complete and return to [Insert Name & Role of Recipient]. Receipt will be acknowledged and action will be taken in line with the Complaint's Procedure.

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Contact telephone number:	
Please give details of your complaint. Please try to be specific.	
What have you already done to try and resolve the issue? Including whether you have spoken to anybody in the school about it.	

What has the school already put in place to try and resolve the issue?	
What action do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? What would you like the school to do to resolve the issue?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
Signature:	
Date:	
Official Use	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By whom:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	



Your Name:	
Pupil's Name (if relevant):	

Complaint Form – Stage Two

If your Stage One complaint is unresolved, please complete and return to [Insert Name & Role of Recipient]. Receipt will be acknowledged and action will be taken in line with the Complaint's Procedure.

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Contact telephone number:	
Reason(s) why you disagree with the Stage One findings. Please state what area(s) you are specifically unsatisfied with.	
Please state any aspect in which you think the school's complaints procedure was not fully followed. Specifically, what aspect of the complaints procedure(s) was not fully followed?	

<p>Please state any aspect in which you think any other school procedure was not fully followed.</p> <p>Specifically state the procedure(s) you are referring to.</p> <p>Specifically, what aspect of the procedure(s) was not fully followed?</p>	
<p>Are you attaching any relevant paperwork/documentation/evidence to support above comments? If so, please give details.</p>	
<p>Signature:</p> <p>Date:</p>	
Official Use	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By whom:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	