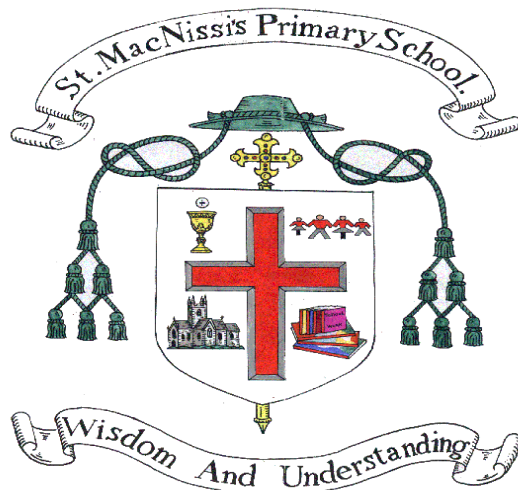


COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

FOR

ST MACNISSI'S P.S.



- ◆ *This Policy will be reviewed, by the Board of Governors, in line with the model 'Complaints Procedure' for CCMS Schools launched in November 2019.*

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Foreword

Our Mission Statement

St MacNissi's is committed to developing each child's full potential to become a positive contributor to society in their adult life. We strive to achieve this by working in partnership with the child, their parents and the wider community, to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding truly reflecting Catholic values

Our School Motto

Learning Every Day in a Fun and safe way

At St MacNissi's Primary School and Pre-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.

We welcome open communication with our staff; you can speak to staff by arranging a meeting through the school secretary.

If you have any issues, please talk to the class teacher as soon as possible. Concerns about matters other than in the classroom should be raised with the Principal, Vice Principal and finally, the SENCO. We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Board of Governors together with the Principal 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.

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, 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.

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.

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.

Some examples of complaints dealt with;

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

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:- Sara Long
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) 	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Children and Young People's Services: - Dr Clare Mangan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ School Development Proposals 	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Education:- John Collings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Child Protection / Safeguarding 	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Children and Young People's Services:- Dr Clare Mangan

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.

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.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

<p style="text-align: center;">Stage One Write to the Principal</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Stage Two Write to the Chairperson of Board of Governors</p>
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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.

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.

Complaint about a Teacher (other than the Principal)

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.

✓ Speaking with the Principal

If your complaint remains unresolved following a meeting with the Teacher, you should arrange a meeting with the Principal to discuss the issue(s). In some circumstances the Principal may not be able to deal effectively with your complaint immediately, and s/he may require some time to investigate and respond. If further time is required, you will be informed of the timescale and the likely date by which the Principal will respond.

Making a Complaint (Formal Stage)

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to have your complaint resolved through the informal processes of speaking with the teacher or Principal however this should 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.

Stage 1:-Writing to the Principal

You should write to the Principal, and state the grounds for your complaint as concisely as possible addressing specifically the issue(s) that are of concern to you.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within ten working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received, and either:

- provide a response to the issue(s) you raised; or
- state that your complaint is being investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 20 working days from the date on which your letter was received). The investigation may require you to meet the Principal and due notification will be given of such meetings. The Principal may also talk to the parties relevant to the complaint.

Stage 2:-Writing to the Board of Governors

If you believe that your complaint has not been dealt with in a satisfactory manner following the completion of steps identified above, you should write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, including, if applicable, copies of the original correspondence relating to Step 2. The Chairperson will be responsible for referring your complaint to a Complaints Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors, which will investigate and respond to your complaint. The Complaints Sub-Committee will have a minimum of three voting members.

Your written complaint should be as concise as possible and address specifically the issue(s) that are of concern to you. You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within ten working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received, and either:

- provide a response to the issue(s) you raised; or
- state that your complaint is being fully investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 20 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received).

The investigation may require you to meet the Complaints Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors and due notification will be given of such meetings. The Complaints Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors may also talk to the parties relevant to the complaint.

Appeals Process

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors, you may appeal the decision to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

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

Complaint about the Principal

If your complaint is about the Principal or if the complaint is unresolved after Stage One, proceed to Stage 2. 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 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.*

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

Web: www.nipso.org.

WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE?

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 there are no grounds for your complaint, you will be advised accordingly.

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.

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.

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.

1.1. 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.

1.2. 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.

1.3. 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.

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.

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.

