

# Coleraine College



## Complaints Procedure September 2024

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## **Foreword from the Principal:**

*Here at Coleraine College, we take complaints very seriously. We aim to develop healthy partnerships with our pupils' families. The success of our pupils is directly linked to how they are supported and encouraged both in school and at home and in keeping with our Mission Statement and School Ethos we have the best interests of all our pupils and their families at the centre of all we do. Whilst it is uncommon, there may be occasions when you may wish to discuss your dissatisfaction with school. In these circumstances it is important that we are made aware as soon as possible so that we can focus on progressing the situation to everyone's satisfaction – most importantly for the pupil.*

*Pupils have opportunities to discuss concerns with their Form Teacher and Head of Year who are always ready to listen.*

## **Mission Statement**

To achieve success for each pupil, the college provides a supportive environment delivering innovative, challenging learning experiences. As part of the local learning community, we promote partnerships, positive relationships, tolerance and understanding.

To equip our young people for an ever-changing world in which learning is a lifelong experience, you can expect Coleraine College to:

- Provide high quality learning and teaching
- Focus on personal achievement and self-esteem
- Prepare pupils for life and work
- Promote an appreciation of our local and global environment
- Encourage independent learning

We believe that young people will flourish in an atmosphere where relationships between learners and teachers are positive. In this climate, we seek to provide a well ordered, caring, stimulating and safe environment.

We seek to provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum to cater for the individual needs of all the pupils in our care. This will include working with other educational establishments within our Learning Community. We believe that a range of extra curricular activities will enrich the experiences of the young people. We encourage pupils to play an active part in their learning through the process of self-evaluation and target setting.

We encourage the highest level of professionalism amongst our staff and in order to facilitate this, we offer continuous professional development. As a whole staff we are involved in self-evaluation and target setting at a subject, department and whole school level. In order to support our learners, we maintain close contact with parents, carers and a wide network of businesses and external organisations.

To further prepare our pupils for adult life we seek to develop high self-esteem and respect for others. We promote the importance of tolerance and understanding to help our pupils become valuable and valued members of society.

We focus on the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of each pupil in our care. In doing so we seek to make education an enjoyable and enriching experience for all in our school community.

### ***School Aims***

1. To guarantee a safe, secure and happy environment for everyone
2. To deliver a high quality learning experience for all
3. To help every learner achieve his/her academic potential.
4. To help students develop a transferable skill set that will equip them for life and work
5. To actively promote qualities of respect and tolerance
6. To provide a wide range of sporting and extra-curricular activities.
7. To play an active and important role in our local community.

### **Resolving a matter:**

If you have any issues please talk to the form teacher/teacher/ Head of Year as soon as possible. We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible. 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 the effective management of the school.

We welcome open communication between our staff and parents / carers.

- If you feel that a matter has not been resolved you can contact the Vice-Principal.
- If, after speaking with the Vice-Principal you feel an issue still needs to be resolved, you are welcome to contact the Principal.
- Please telephone the school to arrange a time when the members of staff are available to speak with you, as you will understand that it can be difficult to ensure their availability for meeting without notice.
- If a parent or carer arrives at the school demanding to see a member of staff without an appointment, they will be asked to make an appointment at the office to arrange a time that is suitable to all parties.
- If a parent /carer comes into school exhibiting aggressive or threatening behaviour, they will be asked to leave the premises immediately.

## AIMS

When dealing with complaints we aim to:

- Encourage resolution of all matters of concern as quickly as possible;
- Provide timely responses;
- Keep you informed of progress;
- Ensure a full and fair investigation of the matter where appropriate;
- Have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved;
- Respect confidentiality;
- Take appropriate action to rectify the matter 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.

If the matter is unresolved at this stage, you may wish to progress to Stage 1 of the following complaints procedure:

### Complaints Procedure – At a glance

Stage One	Stage Two
Write to the Principal	Write to the Chairperson of Board of Governors

### Time Limit

To help us resolve your complaint, please contact us as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, we will normally only consider a complaint within 6 months of you becoming aware of the issue.

### 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 and
- What you would like the school to do.

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 to you by the Principal.

***These timeframes 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 subcommittee 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 to you by the Chairperson of the sub-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)

## 1. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

**1.1** The Complaints Handling Procedure sets out how any expression of dissatisfaction relating to the school will be managed. By taking concerns raised by parents or others seriously at the earliest possible stage, we hope to resolve issues quickly and effectively.

***Some examples of complaints dealt with:***

- Not following school policy
- Communication delays / lack of communication

### 1.2 Complaints with separate established procedures

Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. Your Principal/ Chair of Governors will advise you on the appropriate procedure to use when you first raise your complaint.

***Matters may still be referred to NIPSO, if it is felt that maladministration has occurred.***

Exceptions	Contact
<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 Sara Long
<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 Claire Mangan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School Development Proposals</li></ul>	
<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 Education John Collings

**1.3** The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints, unless deemed by the Chair of the Board of Governors to be of a serious nature. The decision of dealing with such complaints will be at the discretion of the Board of Governors.



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

#### **3.1 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  Clear reasons for our decisions.

#### **3.2 Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint**

In making your complaint you should:

- 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
- Use these procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels

#### **3.3 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.

#### **3.4 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 your complaint takes longer to complete, you will be informed of revised time limits kept updated on progress.

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

#### **3.5 Equality**

The school requires complaints to be made in writing. However, where this is not possible, please contact the Principal who will make reasonable arrangements.

### **3.6 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. 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 we may choose not to respond.