

**HANDLING COMPLAINTS IN St.Patrick’s Primary School Mullanaskea**

Policy Ratified by Governors:……February 2023 ……………………………………….

Signed by Chairperson:……………………………………………………

Date for Review: February 2024



**HANDLING COMPLAINTS IN St.Patrick’s Primary School Mullanaskea**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

**The Governors and staff of St Patrick’s Primary School believe the school to be a vital part of our parish and of the wider Catholic community. As such, we are firmly committed to the aims and ideals of Catholic education and the provision of quality education for all our pupils. St Patrick’s affirms its commitment to a positive and caring pastoral system and to foster an atmosphere of praise, encouragement and mutual respect.**

**AIMS OF THE SCHOOL**

* To implement all aspects of the Northern Ireland Curriculum relating to the primary school as determined by the Education Reform Order (Northern Ireland) 1989.
* To develop: A sense of self-respect in the children, the capacity to live as independent and self-motivated individuals, the ability to function as contributing members of co-operative groups and society at large.
* To help the pupils: Develop lively enquiring minds, apply themselves to tasks with enthusiasm, acquire the ability to question and discuss rationally, develop the skills necessary to successfully complete a given task.
* To provide: Each child with a caring and enjoyable learning environment so that the child’s individual needs are catered for and ensure independent learning facilities for each child.
* To promote the Catholic Ethos throughout the school.
* To involve the Board of the Governors in the life of the school.
* To involve the parents in the educational, social, cultural, physical and moral development of the child and to foster good parent, teacher and child relationships.
* To help pupils respect and understand the world they live in, and the independence of individuals, groups and nations.

# Complaints Procedure – Policy Statement

At St. Patrick’s P.S. Mullanaskea we are committed to listening about the service we provide. We will use this information, wherever possible, to help maintain and improve our service. We encourage and welcome all comments and views, both positive and negative. This policy is designed to establish a clear mechanism for the resolution of complaints which can be verbal, written, taped or E-mailed. Our comments / complaints policy is outlined below.Here at St.Patrick’s P.S. Mullanaskea 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: Telephoning and arranging an appointment with the relevant staff member. Alternatively, you can put your complaint in writing. The school contact details are below.

*St.Patrick’s P.S. Mullanaskea,*

*22 Feddan Road, Mullanaskea,*

*Enniskillen,*

*Co.Fermangh,*

*BT74 9EP.*

*Tele: 02866326539*

*Principal: Dr.L.O’Neill*

*………..*

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. We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

**Aims Of Complaints Procedure**

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.

These procedures do not replace or supplement other established procedures and/or appeals mechanisms in such areas as Child Protection, Special Education, Admissions, Suspensions and Expulsions etc.

In addition, where it becomes evident at an early stage that the nature of your complaint may give rise to future disciplinary action, these procedures will be set aside in favour of other established Disciplinary Procedures.

We are not able to deal with anonymous complaints, and therefore, these procedures do not provide for a resolution of anonymous complaints except for the referral of child protection concerns to the appropriate Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines.

**Complaints Procedure – At a glance**

1. **Stage One**
* Contact the Principal:
* Firstly, contact the Principal by telephone.
* Then contact the Principal in Writing.
* If your complaint remains unresolved you should then move to Stage 2.
1. **Stage Two**
* Write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

**Time Limit**

Please contact the school as soon as possible, unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered within 6 months of origin of the complaint to 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, where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process.

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 5 school 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 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.

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 in writing by the Chairperson of the 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

Web: www.nipso.org.uk

**1. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**1.1** 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.

**1.2 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**  |
| • Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) • School Development Proposals • Child Protection / Safeguarding  | Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Operations and Estates Sara Long Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Children and Young People’s Services Dr Dr. Clare Mangan Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Education John Collings Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Children and Young People’s Services Dr. Clare Mangan  |

**2. WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE**

**2.1 Your rights as a person making a complaint**

In dealing with 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 and
* clear reasons for decisions.

**2.2 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.

**2.3 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.

**2.4 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 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.***

**2.5 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.

**2.6 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 having been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the Chair of Governors will inform him/her 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 it may choose not to respond.

**Supporting children in school through the COVID 19 Crisis**

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will continue to be a safe place for all children to attend and flourish. The Principal, Ms O’Neill will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety.

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will refer to the Government guidance for education and childcare settings on how to implement social distancing and continue to follow advice from the Public Health Agency on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of Covid-19.

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will ensure that where we care for children of key workers and vulnerable children on site, appropriate support is in place for them.

**Physical, Mental and Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Pupils & Staff**

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea understands that negative experiences and distressing life events, such as those that may lead to the need to self-isolate at home and school closures, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. The school will provide additional wellbeing resources to parents.

For children returning to school after a period of absence, staff will be aware of the possible effects that this period may have had on pupils’ mental health. They will look out for behavioural signs, including pupils being fearful, withdrawn, aggressive, oppositional or excessively clingy, you help identify where support may be needed.

Where possible, St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will continue to offer our current support for pupil mental health for all pupils.

We will also signpost all pupils, parents/carers and staff to other resources to support good mental health at this time. When setting expectations for pupils learning remotely and not attending school, teachers will bear in mind the potential impact of the current situation on both children’s and adult’s mental health. The staff of St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will be alert to mental health concerns in children who are at home, and act on these immediately, following our reporting procedures. At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea, we are committed to supporting the positive mental health and wellbeing of our whole school community (children, staff, parents & carers). We recognise that mental health and emotional wellbeing is just as important to our lives physical health.

At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea, we endeavour to ensure that children are able to manage times of change and stress. We aim to ensure that the children are supported to reach their potential or access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that children learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and where they can go if they need help and support. At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea, we take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health, aiming to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to work in a proactive way to avoid problems arising. We do this by:

* Creating and applying consistent ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands
* Helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.
* Promoting self-esteem, and ensuring children understand their importance in the world.
* Helping children to be resilient learners and to manage setbacks
* Teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health.
* Identifying children who have mental health challenges and planning support to meet their needs
* Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience
* Developing an open culture where it’s normal to talk about mental health.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

* Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging
* Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making
* Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements
* Promoting opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others.
* Promoting opportunities to reflect

Supporting and promoting mental health and wellbeing of staff is an essential component of a healthy school. At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea we promote opportunities to maintain a healthy work life balance. Staff are supported pastorally and have access to enriched opportunities.

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health and to understand the protective and risk factors for mental health

**The Promotion of Healthy, Respectful Relationships including the use of Language, Behaviours and Consent**

The school promotes healthy relationships in all of its practices and policies. Healthy relationships are manifested by how we treat each other through our use of tolerant language, appropriate behaviours and consent. This pervades through all of school life including at extra-curricular activities, school trips, class time, play time and at other social events such as dinnertime in the canteen. This value set is also appropriate when children are online. Any contravention of these basic rules is considered disrespectful, and reminders will be constantly issued on how to be the appropriate.

Each week at assembly, examples of good behaviours are promoted and rewarded through the Pupil of the Week Certificate as well as by the Principal in her weekly address to the staff and children. This transcends to all classes where each staff member reiterates these values. School policies reflect this and are shared accordingly with the parents and Governors.

**Operation Encompass**

We are an Operation Encompass school. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local Police and our school, aimed at supporting children who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. As a school, we recognise that children’s exposure to domestic violence is a traumatic event for them.

When the police have attended a domestic incident and one of our pupils is present, they will make contact with the school at the start of the next working day, to share this information with a member of the safeguarding school. This will allow the school safeguarding team to provide direct or indirect support to this child and family.

This information will be treated like any other child protection information as per DE Circular 2020/07. It will only be shared outside of the safeguarding team on a proportionate and need to know basis. All members of the safeguarding team will complete the online Operation Encompass training, so they able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency.