

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

FOR

COLERAINE GRAMMAR SCHOOL



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1. FOREWORD

- This document sets out how Coleraine Grammar School (CGS) will normally deal with complaints about the school.
- The school recognises that there will be occasions when its actions do not meet the reasonable expectations of its stakeholders or members of the public. Our complaints procedure is designed to enable proper consideration to be given to each complaint in a way that is as fair and impartial 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 staff and the wide range of users is vital to the effective management of the school.
- If you have any issues, please talk to the Pastoral Leader / Head of Year as soon as possible by contacting the school office - 028 7043 4331. Concerns about matters other than in the classroom should be raised with the Principal. The school takes all concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.
- If the issue cannot be addressed in this manner or you remain dissatisfied, you may wish to make use of the Complaints Procedure set out below.

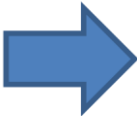
2. AIMS OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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 possible
- 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.

3. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE –AT A GLANCE

Stage One Write to the Principal or if the complaint is about the Principal write to the President of the Board of Governors.		Stage Two Write to the Secretary of the Board of Governors who will refer the complaint to the Appeals Committee of the Board of Governors.
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3.1 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 the original incident or issue taking place/arising.

3.2 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, write to the President of the Board of Governors.* The school requires complaints to be made in writing, by letter, email or fax. Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school and reasonable arrangements will be made to support you with this process.

Your complaint should be addressed to:

Dr D Carruthers

or

The President of the Board of Governors

Principal/Headmaster

Coleraine Grammar School

23-33 Castlerock Road

Coleraine

BT51 3LA

Telephone 028 7043 4331

Facsimile 028 7035 2632

Email info@colerainegrammar.com

3.3 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.

3.4 The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 school days and a response normally made within 20 school days of receipt of the complaint. If the school is unclear on any point it will contact you to seek clarification in order that all the points raised can be fully considered. In some circumstances, for instance where the issues are particularly complex, the Principal will write to you with a revised time-scale at the earliest opportunity.

3.5 The definition of a school day in this procedure will be any day on which there is a timetabled session and the pupils are in attendance. These exclude school holidays and ‘inset’ or training days where the pupils are not present.

3.6 The 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.

3.7 If you remain unhappy with the outcome at Stage One, the complaint may be progressed to Stage Two which is overseen by the Appeals Committee of the Board of Governors.

3.8 Stage Two

If the complaint is unresolved after Stage 1 and you wish to progress to Stage 2 of this procedure, write to the Secretary of the Board of Governors (*care of the school and marked ‘private and confidential’*) within 20 school days of the date of issue of the Stage 1 response to the complaint.

Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school and reasonable arrangements will be made to support you with this process. The Secretary of the Board will refer the matter to the Appeals Committee to review the complaint. Please provide as much detail as possible as indicated above. If the Appeals Committee is unclear on any point it will contact you to seek clarification in order that it can consider all the points raised. Once again, for instance where the issues are particularly complex, the Chairperson of the Appeals Committee will write to you with a revised time-scale if it is considered necessary in the circumstances.

3.9 A Stage Two complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 school days and a final response normally made within 20 school days from date of receipt of the Stage Two complaint. The response will be issued in writing by the Chairperson of the Appeals Committee.

3.10 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 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

Telephone: 02890 233821
Freephone: 0800 34 34 24
Email: nipso@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 statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms are not covered by the school's Complaints Procedure. Some of these procedures are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. Some complaints may be dealt with under alternative school policies. The Principal or President 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
<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
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Development Proposals	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 President 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. Even where in the Board's opinion an anonymous complaint should be investigated, this policy accepts that a panel may determine that the anonymous complaint does not provide adequate information for an investigation to be conducted.

5. WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE

5.1 Your rights as a person making a complaint

In dealing with a 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.

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 you may be accompanied but not represented by another person.

This Procedure does not take away from the statutory rights of any of the participants.

Those involved in the complaint may be interviewed. These might include the following:-

Complainant: - will be informed that they may be accompanied but not represented by another person during the process, for example 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 Member, including non-teaching staff: - should be informed that they may be accompanied or represented by another person during the process; for example, 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 pupils should be accompanied by parent, guardian or other nominated adult.

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.

5.4 Timeframes

Where concerns are raised prior to a written complaint, a response will normally be provided during the meeting or within an agreed timeframe.

Stage One complaint – Normally acknowledged within 5 school days and a response normally given within 20 school days

Stage Two complaint

If the complaint is unresolved after Stage 1 and you wish to progress to Stage 2 of this procedure, write to the Secretary of the Board of Governors (*care of the school and marked 'private and confidential'*) within 20 school days of the date of issue of the Stage 1 response to the complaint.

Stage Two complaint – Normally acknowledged within 5 school days and a response normally given within 20 school days

The definition of a school day in this procedure will be any day on which there is a timetabled session, and the pupils are in attendance. These exclude school holidays and 'inset' or training days where the pupils are not present.

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.

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 and reasonable arrangements will be made to support you 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.

However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been completed, including where the complaint has been reviewed by the

Ombudsman, a complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant is trying to re-open the same issue, the President of the Board of Governors will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. If a complainant repeatedly continues to contact the school with the same issue it may then choose not to respond.