



MAGHERAFELT LEARNING PARTNERSHIP
HANDLING COMPLAINTS

St. Pius X College

Revised June 2010

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MLP SCHOOLS

	<p>Kilronan School</p>
	<p>Magherafelt High School</p>
	<p>Rainey Endowed School</p>
	<p>Sperrin Integrated College</p>
<p>St. Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt.</p> 	<p>St. Mary's Grammar School</p>
	<p>St Pius X College</p>

CONSULTATION

Each school has consulted with:

- staff
- parents/guardians
- pupils
- partner schools, businesses, organisations and suppliers

in the formulation of this policy.

ADOPTION

- Each Senior Leadership Team reviewed the policy in June 2010.
- Each Board of Governors formally adopted the policy in September 2010.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually in Term 3 by the Vice Principals of the Magherafelt Learning Partnership

RATIONALE

Each school in the Magherafelt Learning Partnership is committed to listening about the service it provides. It is important, therefore, that parents/guardians, pupils, partner schools, businesses, organisations and suppliers are enabled to comment on the service, in a context of continuous improvement. It is recognised that, on occasion, stakeholders may be dissatisfied with some aspect of our service. Staff will respond to complaints in a positive, courteous and professional manner. This Handling Complaints Policy seeks to establish a clear mechanism for the resolution of complaints. This policy is compatible with all other policies in each school's portfolio of policies and takes account of recent Human Rights legislation (December 2003).

AIMS

ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

We will not 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.

ZERO TOLERANCE

The Magherafelt Learning Partnership will operate a strict Zero Tolerance policy towards any person or persons who makes a complaint in an angry, abusive or threatening manner. All staff are instructed to terminate any conversation where this policy is contravened.

Our Handling Complaints procedure aims to:

- provide an efficient and thorough system through which issues are effectively addressed;
- facilitate each school in providing the best possible service for its pupils and the local community;
- provide a simple, speedy and accessible service that respects confidentiality;
- be courteous and respectful;
- address issues arising from complaints in a fair and honest manner within the timescales set out;
- treat individuals and groups with openness, equality and inclusiveness;
- keep people informed of progress and the final outcome of the issues raised, and;
- be simple, easily accessible and easy to use.

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 further details of which may be obtained by contacting the Principal at the school.

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

GUIDELINES

WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THESE PROCEDURES

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 – concerns will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility that we may have to consult with other appropriate Agencies about your complaint;
- reasons for our decisions.

Where there are grounds to your complaint, we will acknowledge this and address the issues you have raised. Similarly, we will ensure that you are clearly advised where we believe that there are no grounds to your complaint.

Your RESPONSIBILITIES as a person making a complaint

In raising an issue, we would expect that you:

- raise issues in a timely manner;
- treat our staff as professionals, in a non-threatening manner and with respect and courtesy;
- provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issue you raise;
- use these procedures fully and engage in them at the appropriate levels.

A full list of staff, including their roles, is available on the school website:

- Magherafelt High School: www.magherafelthigh.org
- Rainey Endowed: www.raineyendowed.com
- Sperring Integrated: www.sperrin.magherafelt.ni.sch.uk
- St. Mary's Grammar School: www.stmarysmagherafelt.com
- St. Pius X College: www.stpiusxcollege.org

HANDLING A COMPLAINT

At each stage, a member of staff will be accompanied by a colleague, who will take a note of the meeting for the school's records.

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL: VERBAL CONTACT WITH MEMBER OF STAFF

In the first instance, a complaint or concern should normally be referred verbally to the member of staff concerned in the following way:

- the person making the complaint should telephone the school, give his/her name and brief details of the issue eg “I would like to speak to Mrs Brown about my son's Maths test.”
- the member of staff will be informed and expected to reply, if possible, within the school day. If a member of staff is not in school or is unavailable for any reason, the person making the complaint will be so advised and given an indication of when to expect contact eg “Mrs Brown is not in school today but, I will ask her to contact you tomorrow.”

It is expected that most concerns/issues will be resolved at this initial, informal stage, as, in many instances, they can arise through a simple misunderstanding. This approach would not prevent you from choosing to enter the process at a later stage, if you believe that to be an appropriate course of action.

Note:

Teachers will not be interrupted during class contact time.

STAGE 2 – INFORMAL: VERBAL CONTACT WITH HEAD OF YEAR, HEAD OF DEPARTMENT, BURSAR, OFFICE MANAGER, FACILITIES MANAGER, CATERING MANAGER

If your complaint remains unresolved, you should telephone the school and arrange a meeting with the appropriate Head of Year etc. The person making the complaint should give his/her name and brief details of the concern/issue so that some preparation can be made for the discussion.

If you have concerns/issues relating to the Head of Year etc, you should raise the matter as at Stage 1.

It is expected that, in some circumstances, the Head of Year etc will not be in a position to deal effectively with your concerns immediately and may require some time in which to investigate and prepare a proper response. You will be given a clear indication of when to expect a response, eg “I'll look into this matter and get back to you by the end of the week.”

STAGE 3 – FORMAL: WRITING TO THE PRINCIPAL

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to have your complaint resolved at source through the informal routes proposed at Stages 1 and 2 or indeed it might be more appropriate to

initiate the procedures at this stage. Your written complaint should be as concise as possible and address specifically the issue or issues that are of immediate concern to you.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received, and either:

- provide a response to the issues you have raised; or;
- indicate that your concerns are being fully investigated and the timeframe – a maximum of 20 working days from the date on which your letter was received – against which you can expect a response to be issued.

STAGE 4 – FORMAL: WRITING TO GOVERNOR SUB-COMMITTEE

If you still believe that your complaint has not been dealt with in a satisfactory manner, or in a case where you decide to raise an issue at this level, you may write to the Chairperson of Board of Governors. The Chairperson will be responsible for bringing your complaint to a Governors' Sub-Committee, which will investigate and respond to your complaint. Your written complaint should be as concise as possible and address specifically the issue or issues that are of immediate concern to you.

However, where it is evident 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 which may subsequently involve Governors at another level.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received, and:

- provide a response to the issues you raised; or,
- indicate that your concerns are being fully investigated and the timeframe – a maximum of 25 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received – against which you can expect a response to be issued; or,
- indicate a date, time and place for you to attend a meeting with this Sub-Committee at which your concerns will be discussed in full. If this meeting is required, it will take place within 20 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received and you should expect a written response within a further 10 working days of the meeting having been held.

APPEALS PROCESS – FULL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Finally, if you still believe that your complaint has not been addressed you may write to the Chairperson of Board of Governors requesting that you be allowed to meet with the full Board of Governors to appeal the outcomes. The Chairperson will be responsible for ensuring that you are invited to the next suitable scheduled meeting of Governors where your appeal will be heard. Your written request should be as concise as possible and set out specifically the grounds for your Appeal.

Again, where it is evident 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 which may subsequently involve Governors at another level.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received and provide you with the date and time of the meeting at which you will have an opportunity to discuss your concerns. Since this process is consultative in nature and not adversarial, a complainant will not normally have the right to be accompanied or represented by any other person, unless it is deemed appropriate by the Board of Governors. Should you wish the Board of Governors to consider your request to be accompanied to a meeting, you should contact the Chairperson, Board of Governors, setting out clearly your reasons for such a request. This meeting will normally take place within 30 working days of your Appeal request having been received.

Following this meeting, and within 10 working days of that meeting, you should expect a final written response. This will indicate the Governors' findings, their recommendations and the reasons supporting their decisions. **At this point, the matter will be considered closed.**

RECORD KEEPING

The School Principal shall maintain a record of all correspondence, conversations and meetings concerning your complaint. These records shall be held confidentially in the school and shall be kept apart from pupil records. All such records will be destroyed five years after the date of the last correspondence on the issue.

If you do not respond within a reasonable time to the outcome of an investigation into your comment / complaint, we will assume that you are satisfied and do not require us to take further action.

This procedure does not provide a role for any other statutory or non-statutory body.

HANDLING A COMPLAINT - OVERVIEW

STAGE 1: INFORMAL

<p>Comment / Complaint made to appropriate member of staff (verbally) (Where possible at an appropriate time)</p>	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discuss the issues ▪ Implement any agreements ▪ No further Action
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STAGE 2: INFORMAL

<p>Comment / Complaint made to appropriate Line Manager and/or Principal (verbally)</p>	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schedule meeting ▪ Discuss the issues ▪ Implement any agreements ▪ No further action
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STAGE 3: FORMAL

<p>Formal written comments / complaints made to Principal</p>	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acknowledge receipt - within 10 working days ▪ Investigate the complaint ▪ Implement any agreements/changes ▪ Confirm outcomes in writing - within 20 working days ▪ No further action
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STAGE 4: FORMAL

<p>Formal written comments / complaints made to Chairperson of Governors and referred to Governors' Sub-Committee</p>	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acknowledge receipt - within 10 working days ▪ Investigate the issues/meet with complainant ▪ Implement any agreements/changes ▪ Confirm outcomes in writing - within 25 working days ▪ No further action
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APPEALS PROCESS

<p>Written request to have case heard by full Board of Governors</p>	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acknowledge receipt - within 10 working days ▪ Meet the complainant - within 30 working days ▪ Consider the issues ▪ Implement any agreements/changes ▪ Confirm outcomes in writing - by the 40th working day
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