

Jonesborough Primary School



Parental Complaints Policy June 2021 (Updated April 2022)



CONTENTS

1	Scope of Complaints Procedure	3
2	Aims	3
3	What to Expect Under this Procedure	4
4	Making a Complaint	
	4.1 About a Teacher other than the Principal	5
	4.2 About a Member of the School's Support Staff	8
	4.3 About the Principal	10
5	Record Keeping	12
6	Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints	12
	Annex 1	
7	Appeals Process	13
8	APPENDICES	
	Appendix 1: Record of School Complaints	15
	Appendix 2: Draft Letter of Acknowledgement	
	of Complainant	16
	Appendix 3: Unreasonable Complaints Guidance	17
	Appendix 4: Third Party Bullying	19

THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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.

- 1.1** 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.
- 1.2** **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.**
- 1.3** 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.

AIMS

- 2.1** In operating this Complaints Procedure we aim to:
 - encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
 - allow swift handling of a complaint within established time-limits for action;
 - keep people informed of progress;
 - ensure a full and fair investigation;
 - have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved;
 - respect confidentiality;
 - fully address all aspects of a complaint and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary; and
 - in the interest of continuous improvement, provide relevant information to the school's Senior Management Team and Board of Governors.
- 2.2** This Procedure is designed to be:
 - easily accessible and publicised;
 - simple to understand and use;
 - impartial; and
 - non-adversarial.

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
- 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 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.

Complainant

Where a meeting is arranged the complainant may be accompanied by another person where it is accepted, by the Board of Governors and the Principal, that this will assist the investigation and resolution of the complaint.

Staff

Staff may seek the advice and support from their professional body or Trade Union and may also be accompanied by another person to meetings where it is accepted, by the Board of Governors and the Principal, that this will assist the investigation and resolution of the complaint.

A member of staff who is the subject of a complaint will be provided with full details of any allegations made against him/her before being required to respond to the matters raised. In many occasions this may be best achieved by providing the member of staff with a copy of the letter. However, the views of the complainant will be sought before doing so.

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.

3.4 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.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

4.1 Complaint about a Teacher (other than the Principal)

4.1.1 Informal Stage

Step 1 - 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.

Step 2 - Speaking with the Principal

If your complaint remains unresolved following Step 1, 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.

4.1.2 Formal Stage

Step 3 - Writing to the Principal

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to have your complaint resolved through the informal processes proposed at Steps 1 and 2, or indeed it might be more appropriate to initiate the procedures at Step 3. 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.

Step 4 - Writing to Chairperson of the Board of Governors

If you believe that your complaint has not been dealt with in a satisfactory manner following the completion of Steps 1, 2 and 3, you should write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, including, if applicable, copies of the original correspondence relating to Step 3. 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:

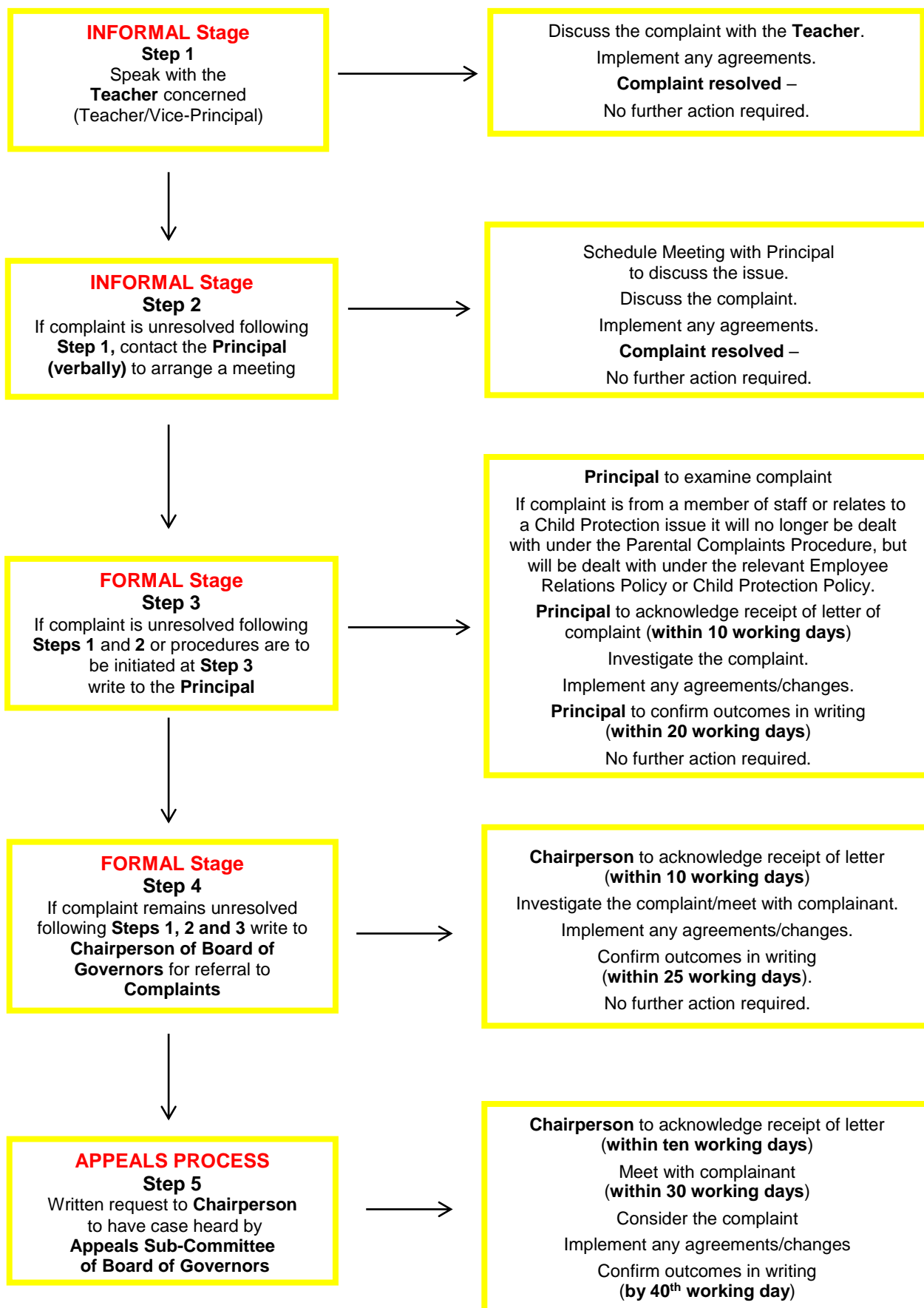
- provide a response to the issue(s) you raised; or
- state that your complaint is being fully investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 25 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received).

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.

Step 5 - 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. This procedure is outlined in **Annex 1, Page 13** .

Making a complaint about a Teacher (other than the Principal) *(with timescales for responses)*



4.2 Complaint about a member of the School's Support Staff

4.2.1 Informal stage

Step 1 - Raising verbally with the Principal

A complaint concerning a member of the school's support staff should be raised verbally with the Principal. A meeting should be arranged 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.

4.2.2 Formal Stage

Step 2 - Writing to the Principal

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to have your complaint resolved through the informal processes proposed at Step 1 or it might be more appropriate to initiate the procedures formally. 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.

Step 3 - Writing to Chairperson of the Board of Governors

If you believe that your complaint has not been dealt with in a satisfactory manner following the completion of Steps 1, and 2 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:

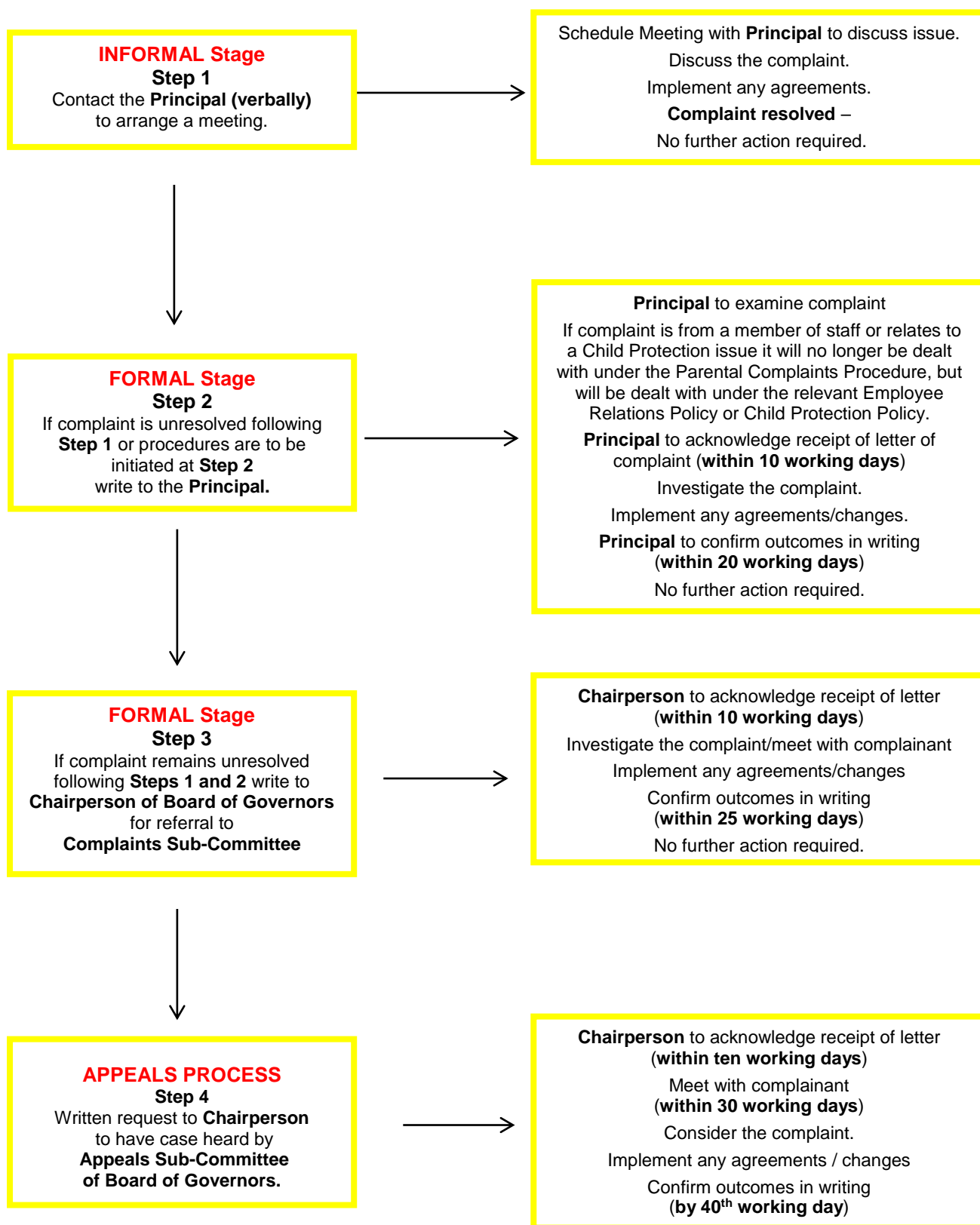
- provide a response to the issue(s) you raised; or
- state that your complaint is being fully investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 25 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received).

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.

Step 4 - 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. This procedure is outlined in **Annex 1 ,page 13.**

Making a complaint about a member of the school's support staff (with timescales for responses)



4.3 Complaint about the Principal

Where a complaint relates to the Principal the matter will be dealt with formally by the Board of Governors.

4.3.1 Formal Stage

Step 1 - Writing to Chairperson of the Board of Governors

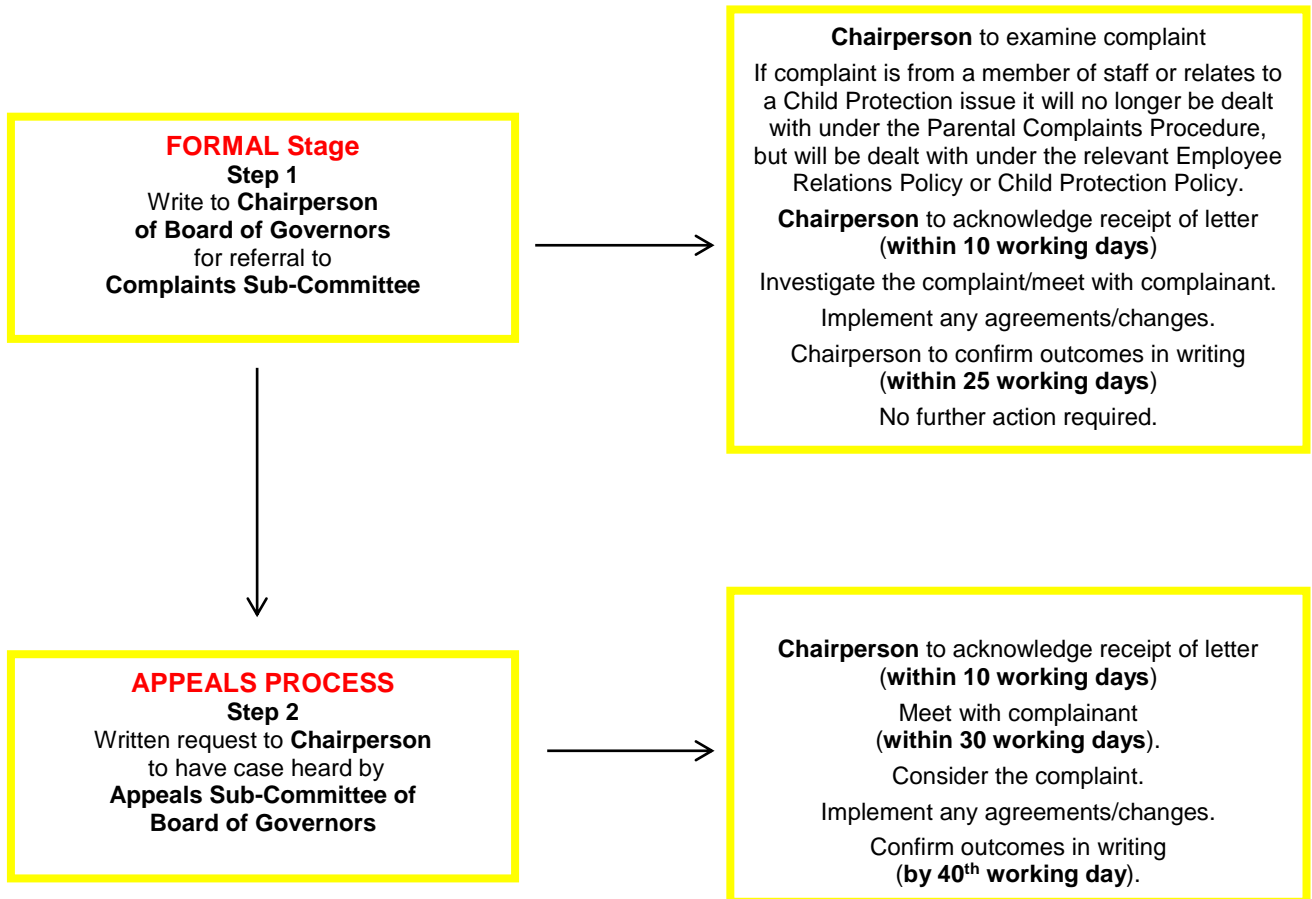
Where a complaint relates to the Principal you should write to the Chair of the Board of Governors, stating the grounds for your complaint as concisely as possible. The Chairperson will be responsible for referring your complaint to a Complaints Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors, which will investigate and respond to your complaint. The Complaints Sub-Committee will have a minimum of three voting members. 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 25 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received).

Step 2 - 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. This procedure is outlined in **Annex 1 ,Page13**

Making a complaint about the Principal *(with timescales for responses)*



RECORD KEEPING

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

FRIVOLOUS OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

Where the Board of Governors considers the actions of a parent/group of parents to constitute a frivolous or vexatious complaint, it will seek advice from the relevant employing authority in order to protect staff from further such actions.

ANNEX I

APPEALS PROCESS – APPEALS SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors, you may write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors within ten working days of receiving written feedback from the Complaints Sub-Committee, appealing their decision. Your written request should be as concise as possible and set out specifically the grounds for your appeal.

The Chairperson will be responsible for establishing an Appeals Sub-Committee comprising of at least three members of the Board of Governors who were not involved in the original investigation. You will be invited to a meeting of the Appeals Sub-Committee where your appeal will be heard.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within ten working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received and provide you with the date and time of the meeting with the Appeals Sub-Committee at which you will have an opportunity to explain the grounds for your appeal. This meeting will normally take place within 30 working days of your appeal request having been received.

Within ten working days of this meeting, you should expect a final written response. This will indicate the Governors' findings, their recommendations and the reasons supporting their decisions.

If following step 5, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you can refer the matter to the Office of the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman (NIPSO).

A complaint should normally be referred to NIPSO within six months of the final response from the school.

Contact details for NIPSO are: (Freepost: FREEPOST NIPSO)

**Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN.**

**Telephone: 02890 233821
Freephone: 0800 343424**

**Email : nipso@nipso.org.uk
Web: www.nipso.org.uk**

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Record of School Complaints	page 15
Appendix 2: Draft Letter of Acknowledgement of Complainant	page 16
Appendix 3: Unreasonable Complaints Guidance	page 17
Appendix 4: Third Party Bullying	page 19

APPENDIX ONE: Record of School Complaints

Date Initial Letter Received	Nature of Complaint Curriculum Behaviour Bullying Staff	Stage One Handled By: Principal or Nominated staff	Stage Two Handled By: Names of Governors	Ombudsman Contact Name of contact

APPENDIX TWO: Draft Letter of Acknowledgement

Name
Address

Dear

I acknowledge receipt of your letter of complaint which was received on ../../... We will carry out an investigation of the issues in line with our complaints procedure and will respond to you by (insert a date 20 days from receipt of the letter).

As part of our investigation, we may wish to speak to you and if that is the case we will be in touch to arrange this.

I enclose a copy of our school's complaints procedure for your information.

Yours sincerely

Principal's Signature
Contact details

APPENDIX THREE: Unreasonable Complaints Guidance

Guidance on unreasonable complaints

On occasion, people can pursue complaints in a way that is deemed unacceptable either through their behaviour, persistence or the nature of the complaint. 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.

Unreasonable complaints are time consuming; they can be extremely stressful and upsetting and can take up valuable resources and staff time. Whilst the school makes every effort to respond with patience and sympathy to the needs of all complainants, there are times when there is nothing further which can reasonably be done to assist or to rectify a real or perceived problem.

Everyone has the right to be treated with respect. No member of staff is expected to continue with any engagement that is of an abusive or aggressive nature. For example, staff may end telephone calls or meetings where this occurs. It is important that staff are clear about how to deal with these situations when they arise and that complainants are aware of how unreasonable complaints and/or behaviour will be managed.

Guide for Staff

All complaints must be managed in accordance with the school's complaints procedure. The stages of the procedure are designed to ensure that complainants have the opportunity of rigorous scrutiny of their issues.

Any decision to treat a complainant as unreasonable must take into account the need to ensure that the complaints procedure is being fairly applied and every attempt has been made to communicate and address concerns about behaviour/conduct with the complainant.

People may act out of character in a time of trouble, anxiety or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint. Reasonable allowances should be made for this. However, we do consider actions that result in unreasonable demands on our office or unreasonable behaviour towards staff to be unacceptable. It is these actions we aim to manage under this policy.

It is also important to consider that due to some disabilities and medical conditions some people may be potentially more aggressive. Whilst we will never tolerate aggressive behaviour, you should think carefully about whether this may be the cause and make reasonable and appropriate allowances.

Complainants may be deemed to be unreasonable where they:

- Persist in pursuing a complaint where the school's complaints process has been properly implemented and exhausted;
 - Persistently change the substance of a complaint or continually raise new issues whilst the complaint is being addressed. Care must be taken not to disregard new issues which are significantly different from the original complaint;
 - Repeatedly do not clearly identify the precise issues which they wish to be investigated, despite the reasonable efforts of staff to help them specify their concerns;
 - Have threatened verbally with or without the use of foul and abusive language or used or threatened to use physical violence towards employees; 25
 - Have had an excessive contact with the school, placing unreasonable demands on employees. Such contact may be in person, by telephone, letter, email or fax or any other means;
 - Have harassed or been verbally abusive or aggressive towards employees;

- Are known to have recorded meetings or face-to-face/telephone conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of other parties involved;
 - Have made unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seek to have them replaced;
 - Make unreasonable demands of the school and its employees and fail to accept that these may be unreasonable, for example, insist on responses to complaints or enquiries being provided more urgently than is reasonable or outside the timeframes set out in the school's complaints procedure; and
 - Make repetitive complaints and allegations which ignore the replies which the school has previously supplied.
- A complainant may display one or a combination of the above examples. The list is not exhaustive and each case must be considered on its own merit.

Options for Dealing with Unreasonable Complainants

The decision to treat a complainant as unreasonable should not be taken lightly. The following questions should be considered:

- Has the complaint been, or is it being, investigated properly in line with the school's complaints procedure?
- Has communication with the complainant been timely, adequate and accessible?
- Has the complainant provided any significant new information that might affect the school's view of the complaint?

The options below can then be considered:

Consider offering the complainant a meeting with a member of staff of appropriate seniority provided there has been no verbal abuse or threat of violence. A communication (in a suitable format for the complainant), setting out responsibilities of the parties involved if the school is to continue processing the complaint. If the terms are not met, consideration will then be given to implementing one or more actions set out below.

Decline contact with the complainant, either in person, by telephone, by fax, by letter, by email or any combination of these, provided that one form of contact is maintained. This may also mean that one named member of staff will be nominated to maintain contact.

Notify the complainant, in writing, that the school has responded fully to the points raised and has tried to resolve the complaint but there is nothing more to add and continuing contact on the matter will serve no useful purpose. The complainant will also be notified that the correspondence is at an end, advising that they are being treated as an unreasonable complainant and that the school does not intend to engage in further correspondence dealing with the complaint.

Temporarily suspend all contact with the complainant, while seeking advice or guidance from EA legal advisers, health, safety and security staff or other relevant agencies for example PSNI. This temporary suspension of contact may include the blocking of emails from the complainant to staff who may have been subjected to harassment.

Once a decision has been reached to use any of the actions above, the principal or chairperson of governors should advise the complainant of their right to a review of the decision. A review will be undertaken 4 months after the decision.

APPENDIX FOUR: Bullying and/or Harassment by a Third Party Other Than an Employee

Preamble

The purpose of this Annex is to set out the process to be followed where the complaint is in relation to bullying and/or harassment by a third party who is not an employee of the school. The general principles detailed in the main Policy and Procedure document will apply, as appropriate.

As in the Policy document (paragraph 4.2), mediation is available to the parties and may lead to resolution of the issues, through consensus.

Process

1. Where the complaint concerns an external third party e.g. member of the public, sub-contractor etc.

1.1 Where a teacher considers that he/she is subject to unacceptable behaviour by an external third party he/she may choose to speak directly to the person to try to resolve the situation. The teacher should report the incident and outcome to the principal.

1.2 Alternatively, the teacher may prefer to report the incident/s to the principal who should discuss the situation with the teacher and agree a course of action. Where this resolves the matter a record of the event should be kept by the principal.

1.3 Where this is unsuccessful or where the teacher and/or principal prefer, the matter may be referred to the Board of Governors.

1.4 The teacher should outline the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors who shall establish a sub-committee of governors to meet with the teacher and ascertain the nature of the allegations.

1.5 The sub-committee shall contact the person/s against whom the allegation is made and invite him/her to a meeting with the sub-committee to discuss the complaint. Where the person/s against whom the allegation is made refuses or fails to attend the meeting, the sub-committee may come to a view in their absence.

1.6 The sub-committee shall meet with any witnesses to the incident/s and obtain witness statements.

1.7 Having considered the matters, the sub-committee shall prepare a report of their findings and make recommendations on a way forward.

1.8 The sub-committee shall meet with both parties to discuss the report and attempt to agree a way forward. Reaching a solution with a third party may be very difficult and it may be of assistance to use mediation or the support of an officer of the Employing Authority.

1.9 Where agreement is reached, the parties shall be provided with a written statement of the agreement which each shall be required to sign. Where there is failure to agree, this shall be recorded and communicated to the parties.

1.10 Where the sub-committee have found evidence of bullying and/or harassment by a third party and a resolution has not been found, the Board of Governors shall consider possible sanctions against the third party including, for example, exclusion from the

school premises. In such cases the Chair of Governors must consult the Employing Authority and, if appropriate, take legal advice.

1.11 The Board of Governors should monitor the situation.

2. Where the complaint concerns a parent, guardian or carer of a pupil/s.

Informal Stage

2.1 Where a teacher considers that he/she is subject to unacceptable behaviour by a parent, guardian or carer he/she should, if possible, discuss the matter with the person. The teacher should report the incident to the Principal.

2.2 Alternatively, the teacher may prefer to report the incident/s to the Principal, who should discuss the situation with the teacher and agree a course of action. The Principal shall contact the parent, guardian or carer, to invite him/her to attend a meeting to discuss the matter. As in paragraph 1.8 above, it may be of assistance to use mediation or the support of an officer from the Employing Authority.

2.3 Where the matter is resolved, the parties shall be provided with a written statement of the outcome. Where the matter is not resolved, this shall be recorded and communicated to the parties.

2.4 If further action is deemed to be required the matter shall proceed to the formal stage. Formal Stage

2.5 It is recognised that there may be situations where it may be impractical or inappropriate to implement the informal stage and/or that the nature of the alleged bullying or harassment requires a more formal approach. In such circumstances it is appropriate for the teacher to request investigation on a formal basis directly.

2.6 The teacher should outline the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors who shall establish a sub-committee of governors to meet with the principal and/or teacher and ascertain the nature of the allegations.

2.7 The sub-committee shall contact the person/s against whom the allegation is made and invite him/her to a meeting with the sub-committee to discuss the complaint. Where the person/s against whom the allegation is made refuses or fails to attend the meeting, the sub-committee may come to a view in their absence.

2.8 The sub-committee shall meet with any witnesses to the incident/s and obtain witness statements.

2.9 Having considered the matters, the sub-committee shall prepare a report of their findings and make recommendations on a way forward.

2.10 The sub-committee shall meet with both parties to discuss the report and attempt to agree a way forward. Reaching a solution with a parent, guardian or carer may be very difficult and it may be advisable to use the services of the mediation team or an officer of the Employing Authority.

2.11 Where the matter is resolved, the parties shall be provided with a written statement of the outcome. Where the matter is not resolved, this shall be recorded and communicated to the parties.

2.12 Where the committee have found evidence of bullying and/or harassment by a parent, guardian or carer and a resolution has not been found the Board of Governors can withdraw licence for parents/guardians/carers entering school grounds or buildings subject to considering any representations from parents/guardians/carers prior to a final

decision being made. It is recommended that principals and chairs contact the Employing Authority for advice in these circumstances.

2.13 If, on completion of the above procedure, the teacher is not satisfied with the decision of the sub-committee he/she may appeal, invoking the internal appeal process (paragraph 6.2 of the main Bullying and Harassment Procedure). There is no further right of appeal.

2.14 The Board of Governors should monitor the situation. In addition to the above Procedure, there are a number of other Policies and Procedures which may be of use to the teacher in dealing with issues relating to parents, guardians or carers of pupils, e.g. Parental Complaints Policy, Promoting Effective Working Relations with Parents/Guardians, Tackling Violence and Abusive Behaviour against Teachers.

3. Where the complaint concerns a member(s) of the Governors, other than the Chair.

Informal Stage

3.1 Where a teacher considers that he/she is subject to unacceptable behaviour by a governor/s he/she may choose to discuss the matter with the person. The teacher should report the incident to the principal. Mediation may be of assistance at this stage.

3.2 Alternatively, the teacher may prefer to report the incident/s to the Principal who should discuss the situation with the teacher and consider a course of action. Where this resolves the matter a record of the event should be kept by the principal.

3.3 Where this is unsuccessful the teacher should refer the matter to the Chair of Governors.

Formal Stage

3.4 It is recognised that there may be situations where it may be impractical or inappropriate to implement the informal stage and/or that the nature of the alleged bullying or harassment requires a more formal approach. In such circumstances it is appropriate for the teacher to request investigation on a formal basis directly.

3.5 The teacher should outline the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors who shall establish a sub-committee of governors, excluding any governors involved in the complaint, to meet with the teacher and ascertain the nature of the allegations.

3.6 The sub-committee shall contact the governor/s against whom the allegation is made and invite him/her to a meeting with the sub-committee to discuss the complaint. Where the governor/s against whom the allegation is made refuses or fails to attend the meeting, the sub-committee may come to a view in their absence.

3.7 The sub-committee shall meet with any witnesses to the incident/s and obtain witness statements.

3.8 Having considered the matters, the sub-committee shall prepare a report of their findings and make recommendations on a way forward.

3.9 The sub-committee shall meet with both parties to discuss the report and attempt to agree a way forward. Reaching a solution with a governor may be very difficult and it may be of assistance to use mediation or the support of an officer of the Employing Authority.

3.10 Where the matter is resolved, the parties shall be provided with a written statement of the outcome. Where the matter is not resolved, this shall be recorded and communicated to the parties.

3.11 If the teacher is not satisfied with the findings of the sub-committee he/she may appeal, invoking the internal appeal process (paragraph 6.2 of the main Bullying and Harassment Procedure). There is no further right of appeal.

3.12 Where the investigatory sub-committee and/or the appeal sub-committee find evidence of bullying and/or harassment by a governor/s they shall submit their report to the Chair of Governors who shall convene a meeting with the remaining governors, including the investigatory sub-committee and excluding any governors involved in the complaint, to decide on appropriate action. The advice of the employing authority must be taken in advance of a decision.

3.13 Where the bullying and/or harassment was of a minor nature or genuinely unintentional it may be appropriate to record a note of censure and issue the governor/s responsible with a warning, stating clearly that the behaviour is unacceptable and must not be repeated.

3.14 Where the bullying and/or harassment is of a more serious nature it may be appropriate to record a vote of no confidence. In such circumstances it would be expected that the governor/s responsible for the bullying and/or harassment would step down from their governorship.

3.15 Where the governor/s refuses to step down from governorship, the matter will be referred to the Department of Education for action under Article 23 (4) of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003.

3.16 Where the investigation has found evidence of Bullying and/or Harassment by the governor the body responsible for nominating him/her to the Board of Governors shall be advised, in writing, including any resulting recommendations or action taken.

4. Where the complaint concerns the Chair of Governors.

4.1 The procedure will be as outlined for complaints against governors except that:

- at 3.3 and 3.5 read vice chair;
- at 3.5 the vice chair should obtain the agreement of the governors to the Employing Authority appointing an independent person to conduct the investigation, the findings of which the governors must agree to accept.