



## Christian Brothers' Grammar School Omagh Complaints Procedure

Approved by Board of Governors: 2019

### Complaints Procedure for Christian Brothers Grammar School (the School)

#### 1. 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 this Complaints Procedure is to address complaints raised by parents, guardians or other members of the public.

- 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 or Safeguarding, Special Education, Admissions, Suspensions and Expulsions, Grievance, Discipline, Bullying and Harassment or the unsatisfactory performance procedures.
- 1.3 The School will not investigate anonymous complaints except where they relate to alleged Child Protection or Safeguarding matters or alleged financial impropriety. This will be at the discretion of the School.

#### 2. 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 Leadership 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.

A copy of this Procedure is available on the School's website or is available from the School on request.

### **3. What to expect under this procedure.**

#### **3.1.1 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 that we may have to consult with other appropriate parties about your complaint and inform the person who is the subject of the complaint);
- 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.

#### **3.1.2 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.

#### **3.1.3 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.
- 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 of complaint. However, the views of the complainant will be sought before doing so to ensure that no breach of data protection occurs.

### **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.

#### **3.1.4 Where the complainant is a Governor**

- Where the complainant is a member of the Board of Governors, he/she will play no part in the management, or appeal, of the complaint as set out in this Procedure.

## **4. Making a complaint**

### **4.1 Complaint about a Teacher (other than the Principal)**

#### **4.11 Informal Stage**

##### **Step 1 - Speaking with Teacher**

In the first instance, a complaint should normally be raised verbally at a meeting with the teacher concerned, so that he/she 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 he/she 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.

You may be advised that the issue should be dealt with by the formal procedure to allow all parties concerned the advantages of the formal procedure.

#### **4.12 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 two members other than the Chairperson of the Board. 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:

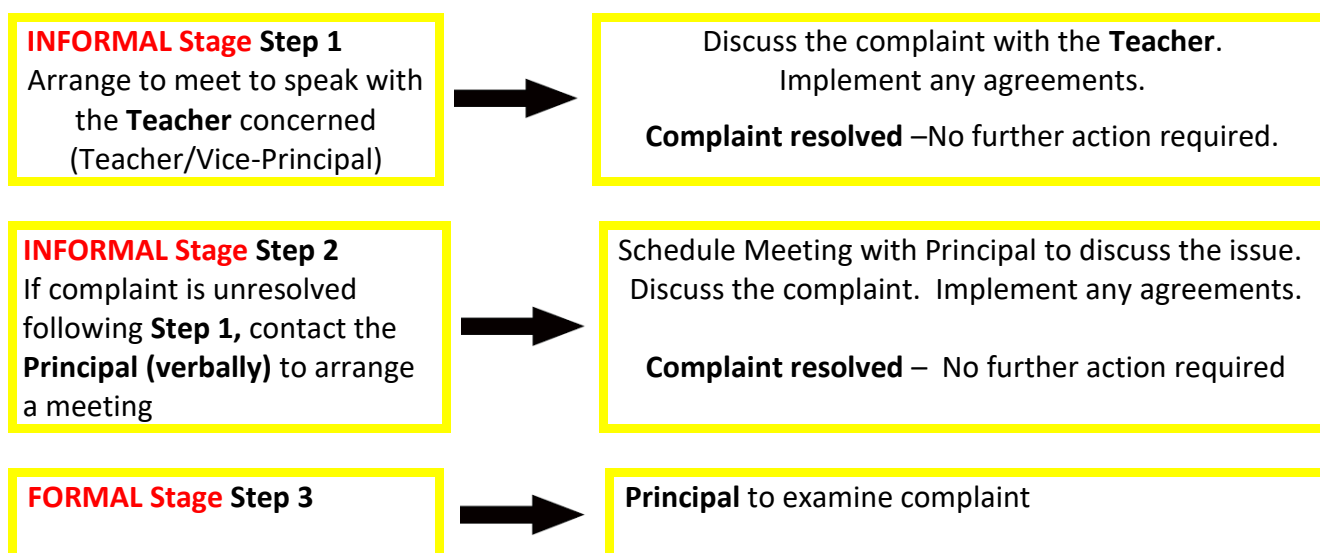
- provide a response to the issue(s) you raised; or
- state that your complaint is being fully investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 25 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received).

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.

#### Making a complaint about a Teacher (other than the Principal)



If complaint is unresolved following **Steps 1 and 2** or procedures are to be initiated at **Step 3** write to the **Principal**

If complaint is from a member of staff or relates to a Child Protection or Safeguarding issue it will no longer be dealt with under the Parental Complaints Procedure, but will be dealt with under the relevant Child Protection or Safeguarding Policy.  
**Principal** to acknowledge receipt of letter of complaint (**within 10 working days**)  
Investigate the complaint.  
Implement any agreements/changes.  
**Principal** to confirm outcomes in writing (**within 20 working days**) No further action required.

**FORMAL Stage Step 4**  
If complaint remains unresolved following **Steps 1, 2 and 3** write to **Chairperson of Board of Governors** for referral to **Complaints Sub-Committee**



**Chairperson** to acknowledge receipt of letter (**within 10 working days**)  
Complaints Sub-Committee investigates the complaint/meet with complainant.  
Implement any agreements/changes.  
Confirm outcomes in writing (**within 25 working days**). No further action required.

**APPEALS PROCESS Step 5**  
Written request to **Chairperson** to have case heard by **Appeals Sub-Committee of Board of Governors**



**Chairperson** to acknowledge receipt of letter (**within ten working days**)  
Appeals Sub-Committee meet with complainant (**within 30 working days**) Consider the complaint  
Implement any agreements/changes  
Confirm outcomes in writing (**by 40<sup>th</sup> working day**)

#### 4.12 Complaint about a member of the School's Support Staff

##### 4.12.1 Informal stage

###### Step 1 - Speaking with the person's Line Manager

A complaint concerning a member of the School's support staff should be raised verbally with the person's line manager. A meeting should be arranged with the Line Manager to discuss the issue(s). The member of staff may attend this meeting if the Line Manager considers this to be appropriate.

In some circumstances, the Line Manager may not be able to deal effectively with your complaint immediately and he/she 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 Line Manager will respond.

You may be advised that the issue should be dealt with by the formal procedure to allow all parties concerned the advantages of the formal procedure.

##### 4.12.2 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 SubCommittee will have a minimum of two 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:

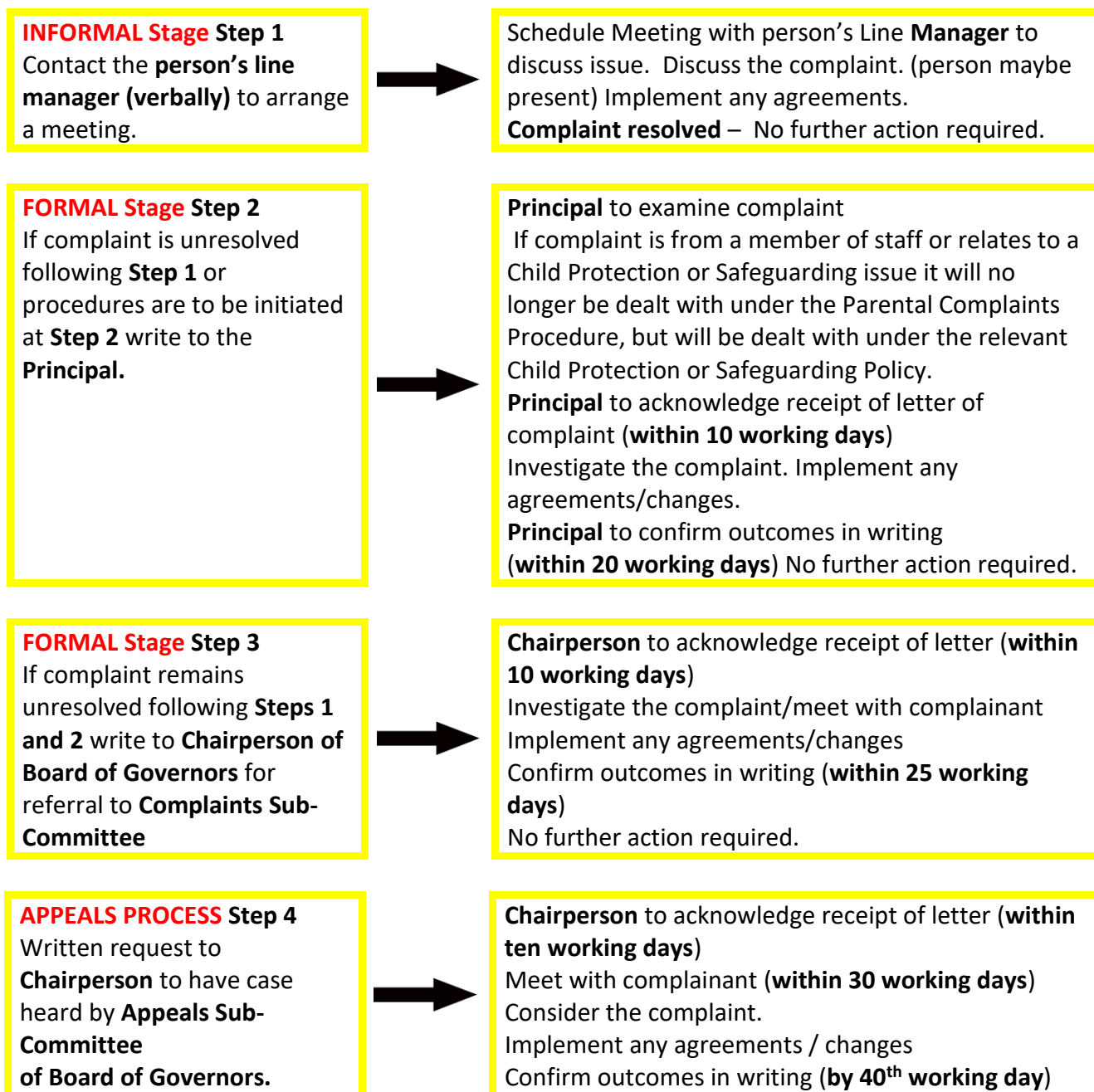
- provide a response to the issue(s) you raised; or
- state that your complaint is being fully investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 25 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received).

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.

## Making a complaint about a member of the School's support staff



### 4.13 Complaint about the Principal

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

#### 4.13.1 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-

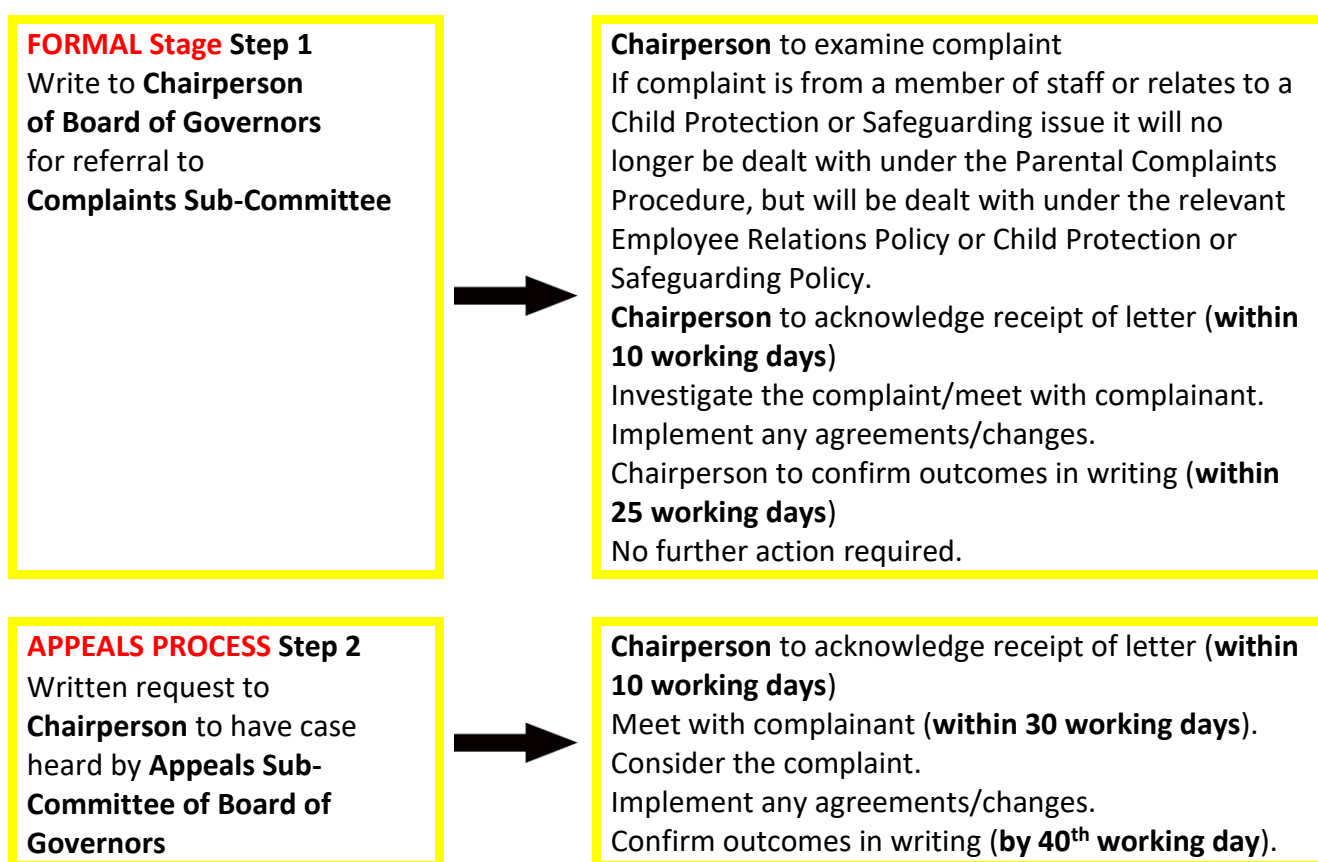
Committee will have a minimum of three members. You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within ten working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received and either:

- 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.

### Making a complaint about the Principal



### 5. Complaint about a Pupil

If you wish to make a complaint to the school regarding the actions or behaviour of one or more of our pupils, you may do so by following these steps:

#### Step 1 – Contacting the school

Contact the School on 028 82243567 at the earliest possible opportunity, provide the receptionist with the outline of your complaint and, if possible, you will be transferred to the relevant Head of School or Vice Principal who has responsibility for the pupil(s). If neither is immediately available, then the receptionist will pass on the detail of your complaint to them by email along with your



contact details to allow them to revert to you at the earliest occasion. You may also lodge your complaint by email by sending it to [info@cbs.omagh.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@cbs.omagh.ni.sch.uk) The relevant Head of Student Learning or Vice Principal will revert to you on receipt of your email.

As stated above, the school will not act on anonymous complaints and you will be asked to provide your name and contact details by the receptionist. It is most helpful to provide a mobile phone number and/or email address for contacting you to allow the Head of School or Vice Principal to respond by voice mail or text if he/she cannot contact you directly when he/she becomes available.

Please note that the school is open for your call in person or by telephone from 8.30 am until 4.30 pm each day. The Head of School and/or the Vice Principal responsible for the pupil(s) may be engaged in teaching or dealing with pupils and may not be able to speak to you when you contact the school. You will be contacted as soon as possible about your call. If you are not available at the contact details provided, the person responsible will leave a message on your voice mail.

Further to contacting you, the Head of School and/or the Vice Principal responsible for the pupil(s) will investigate your complaint and deal with the pupil(s) according to our Positive Behaviour Policy. He/she will then contact you to inform you of the outcome of the matter and its resolution. It may be necessary for you to attend a meeting at the school as part of the process.

### **Step 2 – Unsatisfactory resolution**

If you believe that your complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved by the Head of School and/or the Vice Principal responsible for the pupil(s) you should use the procedure for making a complaint against a teacher other than the Principal that is outlined above.

## **6. 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 unless they relate to other procedures such as Child Protection, Safeguarding, etc. which have their own timescales for record retention.

## **7. Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints**

Where the Board of Governors considers the actions of a parent or group of parents to constitute a frivolous or vexatious complaint, it will take appropriate action in order to protect staff from such complaints and any future similar or related actions.

## **8. 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.

The decision of the Appeals Sub-Committee is final. At the end of the process the Chairperson will inform you, in writing, that the Complaints Procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is considered closed.

If you feel that the school complaints procedure has been mal-administered, you can refer the matter to the office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO). For further information regarding the Ombudsman's please visit [www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk)

OR

### **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

Telephone: 02890 233821

Web: [www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk)