



**KNOCKBREDA NURSERY SCHOOL**

*Nurturing learning for life*

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE ©**

**FOR**

**Knockbreda Nursery School**

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## **1. Foreword**

Knockbreda Nursery School is committed to school self-review, evaluation and improvement.

Our aim is to provide a child focused pre-school experience that is warm and welcoming, open and inclusive, and one that will positively introduce your child to education.

To that end, it is of paramount importance that Knockbreda Nursery School runs smoothly and that parents/carers and staff work together in a spirit of co-operation and always in the best interests of the children.

To facilitate our open and caring, child centred environment, we the encourage the swift and effective resolution of issues, concerns and complaints.

Any issues, concerns or complaints need to be managed properly.

If you have an issue or concern, we would ask that you raise it promptly with your child's teacher or the principal, give the school an opportunity to address the issue or concern and allow us to try and deal with it. In our experience, most issues or concerns can be resolved through effective communication and explanation.

We also wish to promote and encourage the expeditious resolution of complaints. To that end, the School has sought to develop a complaints procedure that is user friendly and will allow complaints to be dealt with quickly and appropriately.

If you have a complaint about Knockbreda Nursery School, please use the following complaints procedure .

## 2. AIMS

Knockbreda Nursery School will encourage the resolution of any issues or concerns that you have through communication and dialogue.

**If you are dissatisfied with the way that the school has addressed your issue or concern, or for any other reason you wish to make a complaint, you must use the school's complaint procedure.** The school is also required to follow this procedure.

When dealing with complaints the school will;

- a. encourage resolution of all complaints as quickly as possible
- b. provide timely responses to complaints
- c. keep you informed of progress
- d. ensure a full and fair investigation of your complaint where appropriate
- e. have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved
- f. respect confidentiality
- g. fully address complaints and provide an effective response
- h. take appropriate action to rectify any identified issue or concern and prevent it happening again, where appropriate
- i. 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**

Stage One - Write to the Principal

Stage Two - Write to the Chairperson of Board of Governors

#### **Time Limit**

Please contact the school as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered by the school within 6 months of origin of the complaint.

#### **Stage One**

When making a complaint, contact the school Principal, in writing\*, who will arrange for the complaint to be investigated. The Principal may carry out all enquiries necessary to enable the complaint to be determined or resolved.

If the complaint is about the Principal, proceed to Stage Two.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 school working days and a response normally made within 20 school working days from the date 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. If the complaint is upheld or partially upheld, the Principal will indicate what is going to be done to resolve the wholly, or partially, substantiated complaint.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are made or ongoing during a school holiday period or if an investigation is, or enquiries are, ongoing. You will be notified of any delay if this is the case.

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, or is a complaint against the Principal, write\* to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors (care of the school and marked 'private and confidential').

The Chairperson will convene a committee to deal with the complaint. The committee will arrange for the complaint to be investigated and may carry out all enquiries necessary to enable the committee to determine or resolve the complaint.

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 and will indicate with reasons whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. If the complaint is upheld or partially upheld, the Chairperson of the Committee will indicate what is going to be done to resolve the wholly, or partially, substantiated complaint.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are made or ongoing during a school holiday period or if an investigation is, or enquiries are, ongoing. You will be notified of any delay if this is the case.

*\*A complaint in writing should be made using the appropriate form which is contained in appendix A of this procedure.*

*\*Where making a complaint in writing may present difficulties, please contact the school and we will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process.*

## **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).

**Please note, NIPSO will normally only accept your complaint if you have already followed and exhausted the internal complaint procedure of the school.**

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 Knockbreda Nursery School and your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction.

A complaint must be referred to NIPSO within six months of the final response from Knockbreda Nursery School, unless there are special circumstances. The school will advise you 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](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)  
Web: [www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk) 8

## **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;

- a. not following school policy
- b. communication delays / lack of communication
- c. difficulties in staff / pupil relationships.

### **4.2 Complaints with separate established procedures**

The school will not deal with certain matters under its internal complaint's procedure where there are separate established procedures in place.

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.

#### **Exceptions**

- a. Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school - Contact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) Director of Operations and Estates
- b. Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) - Contact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) Director of Children and Young People's Services
- c. School Development Proposals - Contact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) Director of Education
- d. Child Protection / Safeguarding - Contact [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) Director of Children and Young People's Services

### **4.3 Anonymous complaints**

The school will not accept or investigate anonymous complaints, save as provided for below.

However, if an allegation or information is received that is deemed by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors to be of a serious nature and merits further investigation, the Chairperson will refer the matter to the Board of Governors. It will be at the discretion of the Board of Governors whether to treat the allegation or information as a complaint and whether it is appropriate to initiate a stage two investigation.

#### **4.4 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.

If a complaint has been dealt with through this complaints procedure, and the complainant remains dissatisfied, the matter may be referred to the Ombudsman. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with any decision made by the Ombudsman, or chooses not to refer the matter to the Ombudsman, the complainant is not permitted to raise the same issue again by way of complaint to the school pursuant to this complaint's procedure.

The school is entitled to refuse to accept a new complaint made where this complaint is similar to, or is grounded upon, a complaint that has already been processed through the school's complaint procedure. This shall be referred to as a 'renewed complaint'.

If a complaint is received by the Principal that the Principal believes falls within this category of renewed complaint, the complaint should be immediately forwarded to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors. If such a complaint is received directly by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, or is received from the Principal, the Chairperson shall determine whether the complaint is a renewed complaint. If the Chairperson is satisfied that the complaint is a renewed complaint, the Chairperson shall inform the complainant of this finding and inform the complainant that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is closed.

If the complainant repeatedly continues to contact the school with the same issue, upon the direction of the Chairperson, the school may choose not to respond where the Chairperson is satisfied that the complainant is vexatious.



## **5. WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE**

### **5.1 Your rights as a person making a complaint**

In dealing with complaint we will ensure;

- a. fair treatment
- b. courtesy
- c. a timely response
- d. accurate advice
- e. 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
- f. clear reasons for decisions.

### **5.2 Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint**

In making a complaint it is important to;

- a. raise issues in a timely manner
- b. treat our staff with respect and courtesy
- c. provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues raised
- d. respond to any reasonable enquiries made from you
- e. use these procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels
- f. make your complaint in writing, where possible, and
- g. use the complaint form provided

### **5.3 Rights of parties involved during the investigation**

Where a meeting is arranged, a 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.

### **5.4 Timeframes**

## **Complainant's obligation**

If you wish to make a complaint, you should contact the school, or if appropriate the chairperson of the Board of Governors, as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered by the school within 6 months of origin of the complaint.

## **School's obligation**

Where a complaint is made to the school or chairperson of the Board of Governors, a response will normally be provided 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 or investigation 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 made or ongoing during a school holiday period or if an investigation is, or enquiries are, ongoing.

## 6. Making a complaint

1. The school requires complaints to be made in writing. A complaint in writing should be made using the appropriate form which is contained in appendix A of this procedure.
2. Where making a complaint in writing may present difficulties, please contact the school and we will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process.
3. Please make a complaint as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered by the school within 6 months of origin of the complaint.
4. Please provide as much information as possible including;
  - a. your name and contact details
  - b. when you say the matter complained about occurred
  - c. if you are complaining about a member of staff at the school, please identify this person, if they are known to you
  - d. what your complaint is about (please give as much information as possible)
  - e. whether you have already taken steps to try to resolve your complaint; and
  - f. what you would like the school to do to resolve your complaint.

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**Knockbreda Nursery School  
Complaint Form**

This complaint form should be completed by the person(s) making the complaint. If you are complaining on behalf of someone else, you must demonstrate that you have authority to make the complaint and there is good cause for you to make the complaint on behalf of another person

**Section 1**

Name(s) of person(s) making complaint: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Full Contact Address & Details:

**Section 2 – to be completed only if you are complaining on behalf of someone else:**

The name of the person on behalf of whom you are making this complaint:

What is your relationship to the person(s) on whose behalf you are complaining and why are you making the complaint on their behalf?

What is the basis of your authority to make this complaint on their behalf?

### **Section 3**

When do you say the matter complained about occurred?

If the matter complained of occurred more than 6 months ago, please provide details of any exceptional circumstances for the delay in making the complaint.

### **Section 4**

If you are complaining about a member of staff at the school, please identify this person, if they are known to you.

**Section 5**

What are you complaining about?

(Please give as much information as possible -  
continue on another sheet, if necessary)

## **Section 6**

Please confirm whether you have already taken steps to try to resolve your complaint and, if so, please provide details of any steps taken?

## **Section 7**

What you would like the school to do to resolve your complaint?

