



RAINEY ENDOWED SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Implementation Date – October 2023

Review Date – October 2026

Signed _____ **BoG**

Introduction

We hope that concerns and issues can be addressed through dialogue with relevant staff. Open communication and regular engagement between the school, parents/carers and other stakeholders is vital to nurturing positive relationships within the whole school community. This policy applies to all current pupils enrolled at Rainey Endowed School (RES).

For students attending RES through the Magherafelt and Rural Learning Partnership or for RES pupils attending a MRLP school, please refer to Appendix 1.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Our school's reputation has evolved over three hundred years. It is based upon sustained high levels of achievement and excellence within and outside the classroom.

We aim to stimulate and challenge the minds of our pupils in order for them to attain the highest academic achievement. Our interest in our pupils is not confined to academic results. We ensure that our pupils acquire life-long skills, which prepare them for the challenges of the future.

We also encourage each pupil to develop their personal talents through a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities.

Our school is a happy and caring community which believes in traditional values. We aim to develop our pupils' sense of belonging and personal qualities of tolerance, mutual respect, courtesy, hard work, and integrity. Each pupil should feel equally supported to achieve their best and develop their talents, however diverse.

At Rainey Endowed School, we take complaints seriously and we have the best interests of all our pupils and their families at the centre of all we do. We encourage anyone with an issue to speak to us as soon as possible. If issues are dealt with at an early stage, then they are more likely to be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. We take all issues seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible, preferably at an early stage.

How to raise a complaint

- If you wish to make a complaint, please follow the School Complaints Procedure outlined below.
- In the first instance, please contact Mrs Denise Young at the school office –
 - Tel: 028 7963 2478
 - Email: dyoung287@c2ken.net

Scope of the Complaints Procedure

A complaint is described as an expression of dissatisfaction with our work.

Complaints with Established Procedures

Our school Complaints Procedure sets out how any expression of dissatisfaction relating to the school will be managed. By taking complaints seriously at the earliest possible stage, it is hoped that they can be resolved quickly and effectively.

Some examples of complaints include:

- Not following school policy
- Communication delays/lack of communication
- Difficulties in staff/pupil relationships

This procedure should not be used for complaints with separate established procedures, however if your complaint relates to the school's failure to correctly administer any of these procedures, then you may complain by means of this procedure.

Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms, which are not part of the school's complaints procedure, are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. The Principal will advise on the appropriate procedure to use when such a complaint is raised.

Exceptions
• Admissions/Expulsions/Exclusion of children from school • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) • School Development Proposals • Child Protection/Safeguarding

ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints, unless deemed by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors to be of a very serious nature. The decision regarding dealing with such complaints will be at the discretion of the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

Aims of the Complaints Procedure

WHEN DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

Our school aims to:

- Encourage resolution as quickly as possible.
- Provide timely responses.
- Keep complainants informed of progress.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation of your complaint.
- 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.
- Be responsive to learning from outcomes that will inform and improve practice within the school.
- Provide a process that is simple to understand and use.
- Be impartial.
- Be non-adversarial.

AVAILABILITY OF PROCEDURE

A copy of this Procedure is available on our school's website and is available from the school on request.

Complaints Procedure – At a Glance

Stage One

Write to the Principal

Stage Two

Write to the Chairperson
of Board of Governors

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

TIME LIMIT

To enable complaints to be resolved, please contact the school as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered within 6 months of the date of the incident(s) about which there is a complaint.

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, proceed to Stage Two. The school requires complaints to be made in writing. Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process.

When writing your complaint, please provide clear information and include the following:

- **Your name and contact details.**
- **What your complaint is about – please try to be specific.**
- **What you have already done to try to resolve the complaint.**
- **What you would like the school to do in order to resolve your complaint.**

The Principal will normally acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible, but within 10 school working days. This will be a short response and you will be sent a copy of the school's complaints procedure. A final response will normally be made within 20 school working days of receipt of the complaint. This response will be issued in writing and will indicate, with reasons, whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.

If, for any reason, the consideration of a complaint takes longer to complete, you will be informed of revised time frames and kept updated on progress.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.

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

If Stage One has been completed, please proceed to:

STAGE TWO

If your complaint is about the Principal or if the complaint is unresolved after Stage One, write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process. The letter can be left at the school office and marked '**private and confidential**'. The Chairperson will convene a committee to consider the complaint.

In the case of the complaint being about the Principal, this committee will investigate the complaint.

Please provide clear information and include the following:

- Reason(s) why you disagree with the Stage One findings.
- Any aspect where you believe that the school's complaints procedure was not fully followed.

The Chairperson of the committee will normally acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible but at least within 10 school working days. A final response will normally be made within 20 school working days from date of receipt of the second letter. 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, for any reason, the review of a complaint takes longer to complete, complainants will be informed of revised time frames and kept updated on progress.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.

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 provided below.

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

Web: www.nipso.org.uk

What To Expect Under This Procedure

YOUR RIGHTS AS A PERSON MAKING A COMPLAINT

In dealing with complaints, 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.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A PERSON MAKING A COMPLAINT

When making a complaint it is important 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 raised; and
- Use these procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels.

RIGHTS OF PARTIES INVOLVED DURING THE INVESTIGATION

Where a meeting is arranged, parties may be accompanied, but not represented by a legal representative or another person.

Complainant: - should be informed that they may be accompanied but not represented by another person during the process e.g., 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 Members: - should be informed that they may be accompanied or represented by another person during the process e.g., 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 (for representation) from parents/guardians. Representation can be made by a parent, guardian, or other nominated adult, who should also accompany the pupil.

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.

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

TIMEFRAMES – SEE PAGES 4 AND 5 FOR THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE.

If, for any reason, the consideration/review of a complaint takes longer to complete, complainants will be informed of revised time limits and kept updated on progress.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.

EQUALITY

The school requires complaints to be made in writing. Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support the complainant with this process.

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. There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been completed and the complaint has been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied. 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.

Any decision to treat a complainant's actions 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. In the event that such a decision has been taken, the complainant will be advised accordingly.

Appendix One: Magherafelt and Rural Learning Partnership (MRLP) Complaints Procedure and Policy.

For MRLP pupils attending a course at Rainey Endowed School or RES pupils attending a course at another MRLP partner school

Rationale:

Each school in the Magherafelt & Rural 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.

In the first instance, a complaint or concern should normally be referred verbally to the MRLP School Coordinator of the host school where your child attends for a MRLP subject in the following way:

- the person making the complaint should telephone the school, give their name and brief details of the issue e.g. "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 e.g., "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, complaints 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.

The List and Contact details for each of the MRLP schools' Coordinators are as follows:

MRLP School Coordinators			
Responsibility	Name	Email address	School
School Coordinators	Hillen, Catriona	chillen515@c2kni.net	St Mary's Grammar School
	Hassan, Niall	nhassan676@c2kni.net	St Pius X College
	Francis, Ian	ifrancis360@c2kni.net	Rainey Endowed School
	Wishart, Grace	gwishart759@c2kni.net	Magherafelt High School
	McBride, Rosin	rmcbride948@c2kni.net	Sperrin Integrated College
	Meenagh, Ciaran	cmeeghan698@c2ken.net	St Colm's High School
	Harvey, Deirdragh Quinn, Aidan (Reporting & Assessment only)	dh Harvey764@c2ken.net ; aquinn678@c2ken.net	St Conor's College
	McGale, Julian	jmcgale839@c2kni.net	St Patrick's College

STAGE ONE

When making a complaint, contact the school Principal and Co-Ordinator of the Host School who will arrange for the complaint to be investigated. If the complaint is about the Principal, proceed to Stage Two. The Host School requires complaints to be made in writing. Where this may present difficulties, please contact the Host School which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process.

When writing your complaint, please provide clear information and include the following:

- **Your name and contact details.**
- **What your complaint is about – please try to be specific.**
- **What you have already done to try to resolve it, and**
- **What you would like the school to do to resolve your complaint.**

The Host School Principal will normally acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible but within 10 school working days. This will be a short response and you will be sent a copy of, (and a link to) the Host School's complaints procedure. A final response will normally be made within 20 school working days of receipt of the complaint. This response will be issued in writing and will indicate with reasons whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld by the Host School. The Home School should be informed at each stage by the Host School's Principal/Co-Ordinator.

If, for any reason, the consideration of a complaint takes longer to complete, you will be informed of revised time frames and kept updated on progress.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.

IF YOU REMAIN UNHAPPY WITH THE OUTCOME AT STAGE ONE, THE COMPLAINT MAY BE PROGRESSED TO STAGE TWO WHICH IS OVERSEEN BY THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE HOST SCHOOL.

STAGE TWO

If your complaint is about the Host School Principal or if the complaint is unresolved after Stage One, write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors of the Host School.

Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process. The letter can be left at the school office and marked '**private and confidential**'. The Chairperson of the Host School will convene a committee to consider the complaint and follow that school's complaints procedure.

In the case of the complaint being about the Principal of the Host School, this committee will investigate the complaint.

Please provide clear information and include the following:

- Reason(s) why you disagree with the stage one findings.

- Any aspect in which you think that the school's complaints procedure was not fully followed.

The Chairperson of the committee will normally acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible but at least within 10 school working days. A final response will normally be made within 20 school working days from date of receipt of the second letter. The response will be issued by the chairperson of the committee and will indicate, with reasons, whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld. The home school be informed by the host school's Board of Governors as appropriate.

If, for any reason, the review of a complaint takes longer to complete, complainants will be informed of revised time frames and kept updated on progress.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.

NORTHERN IRELAND PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN (NIPSO) WWW.NIPSO.ORG.UK

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 Host 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 provided below.

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 or 0800 34 34 24 Email: nipso@nipso.ork.uk Web: www.nipso.org.uk