

# **BALLYMENA ACADEMY**



## **POLICY STATEMENT IN RELATION TO COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

# BALLYMENA ACADEMY COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Preamble

- 1.1.1 Ballymena Academy values the quality of its partnerships and the excellent communication which it has established with parents and with those concerned with the academic and pastoral welfare of its pupils. The school seeks to handle concerns and complaints sensitively and effectively and to use the process of response to individual concerns, formal and informal, to improve the quality of the service it provides.
- 1.1.2 This document describes the procedures to be followed when concerns are expressed or formal complaints are made about the school, the Principal, a member or members of staff, a governor or the Board of Governors.

### 1.2 This Procedure Aims to:

- 1.2.1 safeguard existing high standards, improve quality and uphold the good name of the school
- 1.2.2 promote good practice through speedy, open and transparent resolution of complaints
- 1.2.3 assure those making complaints that the issues raised are addressed in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document
- 1.2.4 provide a staged framework, promote early resolution and prevent unnecessary escalation
- 1.2.5 secure a fair hearing for the complainant(s) and for those named in the complaint

### 1.3 Guiding Principles

- 1.3.1 **Simplicity** straightforward, staged approach
- 1.3.2 **Access** complainants know how and to whom they should complain
- 1.3.3 **Speed and Clarity** complaints processed promptly and effectively
- 1.3.4 **Action** action agreed and reviewed; complainants informed of outcomes
- 1.3.5 **Fairness** defined procedure followed for all complaints

### 1.4 Definition

- 1.4.1 The school encourages parents and others to express concerns and seeks to resolve issues informally. For more serious matters, or where resolution is not reached, parents or (others) may lodge a complaint. Complaints from pupils must be made through parents.
- 1.4.2 A complaint is taken as a formal process  
*"A complaint is a formal **written** expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, action, or lack of action, taken by the school, the Principal, a member or members of staff, a governor or the Board of Governors."*

## 2. RESOLVING CONCERNS

- 2.1 In responding to concerns, every effort is made to resolve issues at the informal stage. It is school policy that appropriate written records are kept, including summative notes of interviews and steps taken to resolve concerns.
- 2.2 Parents and others inform the school of their concerns. The member of staff to whom the concern is expressed will, as applicable, seek to resolve issues which fall within her or his areas of responsibility or refer the matter to an appropriate member of staff
- 2.3 The individual expressing a concern may refer it to Principal, Deputy- or Vice Principal, who will address the issues, often in consultation with other staff, and report back.
- 2.4 If the individual remains dissatisfied, despite the best efforts of staff, s/he is advised to speak to the Principal, who will seek to resolve the issues objectively and appropriately.
- 2.5 The experience is that resolution can be reached in the vast majority of cases but, where this is not so, the Principal will inform the individual that a formal complaint may be lodged and will provide a copy of this procedure.



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### **3. FORMAL COMPLAINTS**

#### **3.1 Receiving and Processing Complaints**

- 3.1.2 The complaint should be addressed to the Principal. (A form [Appendix 1] is provided but is not essential.)
- 3.1.3 If the Principal is the subject of the complaint, it should be addressed to the Chairman of the Board.
- 3.1.4 If a formal complaint is lodged, it will be acknowledged within five working days.
- 3.1.5 A panel consisting of the Chairman and two other Governors will determine, after investigation, whether or not to uphold the complaint. Teacher-governors, the Principal or any Governor with a personal or close connection to the complainant or other individual named in the complaint are ineligible to sit on this panel.
- 3.1.6 The Principal will furnish relevant material for the panel. The Chairman will convene this panel within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint.
- 3.1.7 Governors may seek further information from, or interview the principal and/or other staff from the school, the complainant and her or his child, individuals from external agencies.

#### **3.2 Responding to Complaints**

- 3.2.1 The Chairman will provide a written response as promptly as possible. If longer investigation is required, complainants will be informed of progress, insofar as this is compatible with the rights of individuals and confidentiality.
- 3.2.2 If the complaint is upheld, the panel will make recommendations as to how the matter is to be progressed. Where specific actions must be kept confidential the complainant will be informed that measures have been taken and/or other agencies involved.
- 3.2.3 A meeting with the complainant may also be arranged, to explain the reasons behind the decision.
- 3.2.3 Complainants will be advised in writing of the outcome of the complaint, of the right to appeal the decision and how to lodge that appeal.

#### **3.3 Appeals**

Any complainant dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint, may lodge an appeal by giving written notice to the Secretary to the Board within five working days of receipt of notification of the outcome of the complaint. (For these purposes, receipt of the notification will be deemed to have occurred 2 working days after the date of postage.)

#### **3.4 Hearing Appeals**

- 3.4.1 The notice of appeal, addressed to the Secretary to the Board, will be acknowledged within five working days.
- 3.4.2 The appeal is heard by a panel consisting of three members of the Board of Governors, subject to the conditions outlined in section 3 above and excluding those previously involved. Where possible, the Vice-Chairman convenes and chairs this panel, normally within ten working days of receiving the appeal.
- 3.4.3 The panel will normally **either** uphold the appeal in whole or part **or** dismiss the appeal in whole or in part. Appropriate recommendations may be made to the Principal or Board of Governors. The decision of the appeals panel will be communicated in writing to all parties involved. The letter will outline the reasons for the decision made.
- 3.4.4 If the business of the appeal is not completed in one session, the meeting will be adjourned and a date agreed to re-convene. A reasonable date by which the appeal process will be closed will also be agreed before adjournment.
- 3.4.5 The decision of the Appeals Committee is final. If, at any point in the future, the complainant attempts to re-open the same complaint, s/he will be informed in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is closed.

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### **4. COMPLAINTS AGAINST GOVERNORS**

#### **4.1 Members of the Board**

- 4.1.1 A formal complaint against any Governor should be referred to the Chairman, who will investigate the complaint, usually in consultation with others, using the same procedure as that set out in section 3 above, and decide on appropriate action.
- 4.1.2 A panel of three Governors will be convened to hear the complaint. If the complaint is upheld, in whole or in part, the panel will make recommendations to the Board of Governors in line with relevant provisions of the Scheme of Management.
- 4.1.3 Complainants will be advised in writing of the outcome of the complaint, of the right to appeal the decision and how to lodge that appeal. The appeal process will be that outlined at 3.4 above.

#### **4.2 The Chairman**

- 4.2.1 A formal complaint against the Chairman should be referred to the Vice Chairman, who will investigate the complaint, usually in consultation with others, using the same procedure as that set out in section 3 above, and decide on appropriate action.
- 4.2.2 A panel of 3 Governors will be convened to hear the complaint. If the complaint is upheld, in whole or in part, the panel will make recommendations to the Board of Governors in line with relevant provisions of the Scheme of Management.
- 4.2.3 Complainants will be advised in writing of the outcome of the complaint, of the right to appeal the decision and how to lodge that appeal. The appeal process will be that outlined at 3.4 above.

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### COMPLAINT - Continued -

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please make sure it is securely attached to this form and please give brief details here.**

**Signed** .....

**Date** .....

Send to:

THE PRINCIPAL, BALLYMENA ACADEMY, 89 GALGORM ROAD, BALLYMENA BT42 1AJ

If the complaint involves the Principal or any member of the Board of Governors, send to:

THE SECRETARY TO THE BOARD, BALLYMENA ACADEMY, 89 GALGORM ROAD,  
BALLYMENA BT42 1AJ