



SHIMNA

INTEGRATED COLLEGE

Complaints Procedure

Updated: July 2023

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1. Foreword

Shimna Integrated College is an Integrated, academically excellent, all-ability, student centred and parent/carer friendly school which aims to support the whole school community in living and working productively together.

We value and appreciate the active involvement of parents/carers in the education of their children working collaboratively with staff.

The Principal and staff can be contacted by telephone or email. If necessary, a meeting will be arranged as soon as is convenient for all concerned.

Telephone: 028 43726107

Email: info@shimna.newcastle.ni.sch.uk

2. Aims of the Complaints Procedure

When dealing with concerns/complaints the College will:

- seek prompt, full and effective resolution of concerns or complaints
- ensure a full and fair investigation of your complaint where appropriate
- have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved
- keep you informed of progress and any unavoidable delays
- respect confidentiality
- take appropriate action to rectify the issue and prevent it arising again

A copy of this procedure is available on the College's website and on request from the College office.

3. Informal Resolution

Most issues can be addressed promptly and informally through early and open communication. We encourage parents and carers to start by contacting the relevant College staff as soon as a concern emerges.

College Office - 028 43726107

Your child's Subject Teacher

Your child's Form Teacher

Your child's Head of Year

Assistant Vice-Principal

Vice Principal

Scope Of Complaints Procedure

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

1. Our College Complaints Procedure sets out how any expression of dissatisfaction relating to the College 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:

- not following College policy
- communication delays/lack of communication
- difficulties in staff /student relationships.

2. Complaints with separate established procedures

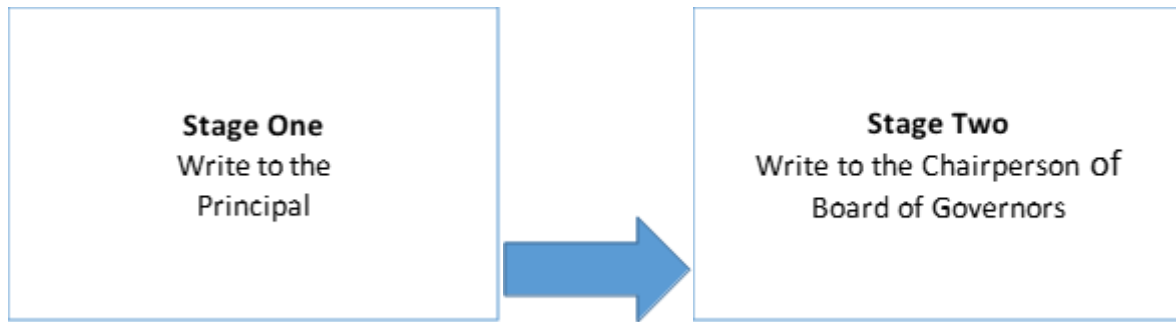
Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms, which are not part of the College's Complaints Procedure are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. The Principal/ Chair of Governors will advise on the appropriate procedure to use when the complaint is raised.

Exceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)• School Development Proposals• Child Protection / Safeguarding

3. Anonymous Complaints

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

4. Formal Complaints Procedure - overview



Formal Complaint - Stage One

When making a complaint, contact the College Principal who will arrange for the complaint to be investigated. If the complaint is about the Principal, proceed immediately to Stage Two.

The College requires complaints to be made in writing using the link below:

[Stage 1 Complaints Form](#)

Where this may present difficulties, please contact the College Office which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process.

Information regarding the complaint should be as detailed as possible including;

- The nature of the complaint, e.g. dates, staff involvement, issues of concern
- action already taken to resolve the matter, including the members of staff involved
- your desired outcome
- your own name and contact details

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 school working days and a response normally made within 20 school working days of receipt of the complaint.

This response will be issued in writing by the Principal who 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, you will be informed of revised time limits and kept updated on progress.

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

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, the formal complaint may be progressed to Stage 2 which is overseen by the Board of Governors.

Formal Complaint - Stage Two

If the complaint is unresolved after Stage One, write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors C/O the Office Manager.

Complaints should be made in writing using the link below:

[Stage 2 Complaints Form](#)

Where this may present difficulties, please contact the College Office which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process.

The Chairperson will convene a panel to review the complaint. It is important that as much detail as possible is provided in the written submission.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 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 panel.

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

These timeframes may be extended if complaints are ongoing during periods of school holiday.

Time Limit

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

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

Freepost: FREEPOST NIPSO

Telephone: 02890 233821

Freephone: 0800 34 34 24

Email: nipso@nipso.org.uk

Web: www.nipso.org.uk

5. What To Expect Under This Procedure

1. 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.

2. Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint

In 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
- use these procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels.

3. Rights of parties involved during the investigation.

Complainant - Where a meeting is arranged the complainant 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.

Staff – Staff may seek advice and support from their professional body or trade union and may be accompanied or represented by another person during the process e.g. union representative, colleague.

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.

4. Timeframes

Where concerns are raised with the relevant staff member/teacher or Principal, a response will normally be provided during the meeting or within an agreed timeframe.

Stage 1 Formal Process – Normally acknowledge within 5 school working days, response normally within 20 school working days

Stage 2 Formal Process – Normally acknowledge within 5 school working days, response normally within 20 school working days

If, for any reason, the review 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 ongoing during school holiday periods.

5. 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.

6. Unreasonable Complaints

The College 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 complaint's procedure having been completed and the complaint having been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied. The College 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.

If they try to re-open the same issue, the Chair of Governors will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant repeatedly continues to contact the school with the same issue it may choose not to respond.

7. Malicious or Vexatious Complaints

Where the Board of Governors consider the actions of a parent, group of parents or any other to constitute frivolous or vexatious behaviour, they will seek advice from the relevant Employing Authority in order to protect staff from further action.

8. Record Keeping

The College will maintain a record of all correspondence, conversations and meetings concerning your complaint. These records will be held confidentially in the College. All such records will be destroyed five years after the date of the last correspondence on the issue.