



*Lisnagarvey High School  
Circular No*

# **LISNAGARVEY HIGH SCHOOL**

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

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# LISNAGARVEY HIGH SCHOOL COMPLAINTS POLICY

## FOREWORD

Lisnagarvey High School believes that all pupils, regardless of ability, are entitled to the best that education can offer. Lisnagarvey has high expectations of all its students and adopts teaching approaches that encourage individuals to strive towards and achieve their own personal goals. Lisnagarvey is committed to ensuring that the curriculum is challenging, interesting and relevant, and that teaching methods are varied and innovative allowing pupils to access curricular content through their own learning styles.

Here at Lisnagarvey High School, we take complaints very seriously. We have the best interests of all our pupils and their families at the centre of all we do. In this regard, we encourage anyone with a concern to speak to us as soon as possible. If concerns are dealt with at an early stage, then they are more likely to be resolved and there is no unnecessary dissatisfaction. Many issues can be addressed simply by talking to the relevant staff member(s) in school (telephone or appointment) who will be happy to help. Open communication and regular engagement between the school staff and the wide range of users is vital to the effective management of the school.

We welcome open communication with our staff;

- If you have any issues, please talk to the Form Tutor, Teacher, Head of Subject, Year Head or Head of Junior/Senior School as soon as possible.
- Concerns about matters other than in the classroom should be raised with the Head of Pastoral Care/Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Vice Principal or Principal.

We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

Lisnagarvey High School's Values;

- Mutual Respect
- Caring and Responsible
- Meeting the Needs of the Individual
- Success for All

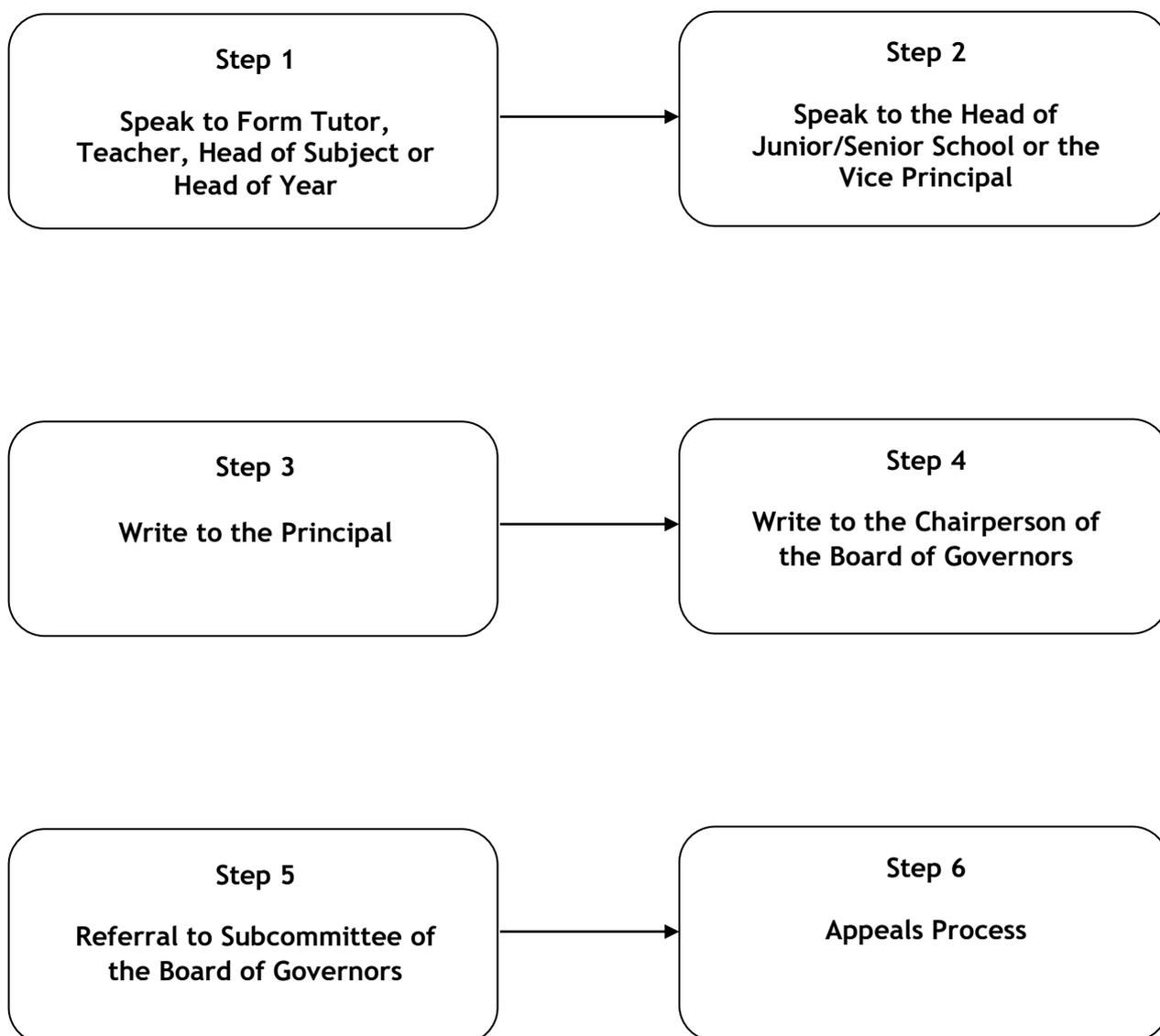
## AIMS

When dealing with complaints the Lisnagarvey High School will;

- encourage resolution of all concerns as quickly as possible
- provide timely responses to concerns and complaints
- keep you informed of progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation of your complaint where appropriate
- 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
- where appropriate, be responsive to learning from outcomes which will inform and improve practice within the school

A copy of this policy is available on the school's website or is available from the school on request.

### COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE - AT A GLANCE



## **MAKING A COMPLAINT**

### **Informal Stage**

The Vice Principal or Principal will arrange for the complaint to be investigated. If the complaint is about the Vice Principal, proceed to Stage Three. If the complaint is about the Principal, proceed to Stage Four.

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.

Please provide as much information as possible including;

- name and contact details;
- what the complaint is about;
- what has already been done to try to resolve it and;
- what you would like the school to do to resolve the complaint

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within five school working days and a response normally made within twenty school working days of receipt of the complaint. This response will be issued verbally (where necessary) or in writing by the Principal and will indicate with reasons whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

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

### **Step 1 - Speaking with the Form Tutor/Teacher/Head of Subject/Year Head**

In the first instance, a complaint should normally be raised verbally with the Year Head 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.

When making a complaint, contact the relevant member of staff: Form Tutor, Teacher, Head of Subject, Year Head, Head of Junior or Senior School or Vice Principal.

If you remain unhappy with the outcome at Steps 1, 2 or 3, the complaint may be progressed to Step 4 which is overseen by the Board of Governors.

### **Step 2 - Speaking with the Vice Principal (Curriculum Matter) or Speaking with the Head of Junior/Senior School/Head of Pastoral Care/Designated Teacher for Child Protection (Pastoral Matter/Child Protection Matter)**

If your complaint remains unresolved following Step 1, you should arrange a meeting with either the Vice Principal or the Head of Junior School (Years 8 - 10) or the Head of Senior School (Years 11 - 14) to discuss the issue(s).

In many circumstances the Vice Principal/Head of Junior/Senior School may not be able to deal effectively with your complaint immediately, and she/he 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 Vice Principal/Head of Junior/Senior School will respond.

If the complaint is unresolved after Step 3, write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors (**care of the school and marked 'private and confidential'**). Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support the complainant with this process. The Chairperson will convene a committee to review the complaint. Please provide as much detail as possible as indicated above.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within five school working days and a final response normally made within twenty school working days from date of receipt of the complaint. The response will be issued in writing by the Chairperson of the committee.

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

### **Step 3 - Contacting the Principal**

If your complaint remains unresolved following Steps 1, 2 and 3, 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 she/he 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. In some situations, the Principal may need to refer to the Chairperson and an informal meeting may be set up.

### **Formal Stage**

#### **Step 4 - Writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors**

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to have your complaint resolved through the informal processes proposed at Steps 1, 2 and 3, or indeed it might be more appropriate to initiate the procedures at Step 4. You should write to the Chairperson, 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 twenty working days from the date on which your letter was received). The investigation may require you to meet the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and the Principal and due notification will be given of such meetings. The Chairperson and or Principal may also talk to the parties relevant to the complaint.

## **Step 5 - Referral to Subcommittee of the Board of Governors**

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 voting members.

You will receive an acknowledgement of your complaint within ten working days. This will confirm that your complaint 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 twenty-five 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.

The Sub-Committee make their recommendations to the Board of Governors who will inform the complainant of their findings.

## **Step 6 - Appeals Process**

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Board of Governors, you may appeal the decision to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors who will appoint an appeals Sub-Committee.

### **Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)**

If following Step 6 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 343424 Email: [nipso@nipso.org.uk](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk), Web: [www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk)

## SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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;

- not following school policy
- communication delays/lack of communication
- difficulties in staff/pupil relationships

### Complaints with Separate Established Procedures

Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. The Principal/Chairperson of Board of Governors will advise on the appropriate procedure to use when the complaint is raised.

**Matters may still be referred to NIPSO, if it is felt that maladministration has occurred.**

Exceptions	Contact
Admissions/Expulsions/Exclusion of children from school	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Operations and Estates
Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Children and Young People's Services
School Development Proposals	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Education
Child Protection/Safeguarding	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Children and Young People's Services

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

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

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

In dealing with complaint 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**

In making a complaint it is important to;

- 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

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

Where a meeting is arranged the 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.

### **Timeframes**

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

**Stage 1, 2 & 3** - Normally acknowledge within five school working days, response normally within twenty school working days

**Stage 4** - Normally acknowledge within five school working days, response normally within twenty school working days.

**Stage 5** - Normally acknowledge within five school working days, response normally within twenty-five 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.**

## **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**

Lisnagarvey High 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 having been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied.

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.