COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

St Martin’s Nursery School

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**Foreword**

***School Ethos***

**School Ethos**

***“Believing, Inspiring, Learning, Achieving”***

In our school our whole approach to Nursery education is child-centred; where the children experience a broad and balanced curriculum which enhances their educational, personal, social and emotional development. It is our aim we foster in children life-long learning values as indicated in our Mission Statement-

*“We aim to develop a lifelong love of learning by creating a safe, positive and inspiring learning environment which supports the emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and creative development, interests and needs of all children; to allow them to grow and thrive”*

At St Martin’s we believe that Nursery Education is a stage in its own rights and that for our children it is the first step on the educational ladder.

 It is the beginning of a secure and rewarding partnership, with home and school, working together to provide a safe and stimulating environment for each individual child. St Martin’s Nursery is an integral part of Holy Trinity Parish.

The Principal, staff, parents and the entire community work in partnership to ensue each child is encouraged to achieve their full potential. We support each child to become increasingly independent and happy in a safe, secure and challenging learning environment.

The staff learn in a collegial approach to ensure that our Nursery Education is a firm foundation for each child’s all-round development and a basis for future learning.

**SCHOOL AIMS**

C CHILD-Each child is recognised as an individual with unique talents, needs and abilities.

H HAPPY-Our children will be supported to flourish and grow in a learning environment guided under God’s presence.

I INCLUSION-We will work in partnership with children, families and the wider community to ensure inclusion and an outstanding education for all.

L LEARNING-Our Learning Environment is safe and welcoming for the whole school community.

D DEVELOPMENT-We will nurture and develop in our pupil’s an awareness of care and respect for others.

These aims will be achieved in a happy, nurturing and caring environment where children will learn through structured play activities in which they can experiment and find success at their own level, growing in independence and confidence as they begin their educational path.

An evaluation of the ethos and aims of St Martin’s Nursery School will be ongoing throughout each school year. The staff team is continually self-evaluative; we have a range of systems in place through which we reflect on our own practice. It is our aim through continuous self-evaluation that as a school we continue to grow and progress.

Parents/families are key partners in their child’s education. It is important that this relationship is fostered and continually nourished. From a child’s first day in St Martin’s Nursery School we are building this relationship; we have an ‘Open Door’ policy and we encourage Parents/families to talk to us and share their views and concerns. We also foster this relationship in various other ways throughout the year; we meet the parents at various scheduled times throughout the year, firstly at the Induction day, then on a daily basis, at two planned Parent/Teacher meetings, at school events such as Curriculum events, Storytelling Evenings and at performances.

We welcome feedback and thoughts through frequent questionnaires and from responses provided orally and shared through our school sharing App Seesaw. These responses and feedback help us to evaluate and review the effectiveness of our practices which helps ensure the school aims continue to be achieved.

*“Connecting Home and School makes us a*

*GREAT COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS”*

Here in St Martin’s Nursery 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 in school 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; We operate an Open Door Policy and encourage parents to bring issues to our attention during drop off or pick up times or alternatively you can request to speak to your child’s teacher or the Principal by telephoning on 02890622235 to arrange a meeting.

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

**AIMS**

When dealing with complaints the 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 Procedure is available in the Hall notice board and is available from the school on request.

Complaints Procedure – At a glance

**Stage Two**

Write to the Chairperson of Board of Governors

**Stage One**

Write to the Principal

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 origin of the complaint to the school.

**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. (see guidance notes for further information),

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 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 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. 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, 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 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.

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

**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

**1. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

1.1 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;  not following school policy  communication delays / lack of communication  difficulties in staff / pupil relationships.

1.2 Complaints with separate established procedures

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Exceptions | Contact |
| Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) School Development Proposals Child Protection / Safeguarding | Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Operations and Estates Sara Long Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Children and Young People’s Services Dr Clare Mangan   Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Education John Collings   Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Children and Young People’s Services Dr Clare Mangan |

1.3 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. (see guidance notes for further information)

**2. WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE**

2.1 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.

2.2 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 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 – 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 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.***

2.5 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.

2.6 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 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.

A full set of guidance materials to support this procedure is currently being developed. It will be helpful to consult this to understand the scope of the complaints procedure.