



## SCHOOL

# POLICY

<b>Policy Name:</b>	Complaints Policy
<b>Review date:</b>	January 2024
<b>Date to be reviewed:</b>	January 2026
<b>Agreed by the BOG on:</b>	January 2021
<b>Policies which are linked to this policy:</b>	Child Protection, Staff Code of Conduct

Integrated Education has been one of the most significant social developments within Northern Ireland in the last 40 years. Priory wears its Integrated ethos and practice with pride, Integration is prioritised by school leadership and is led by the Principal, BOGs and a drive team, under the leadership of the newly appointed Integration Co-ordinator. The four core principles of integrated education - **equality, faith and values, parental involvement** and **social responsibility** are central in all we do. Integration and Inclusion remains high on the agenda of the college and we will endeavour to make sure that every child is welcomed and taught in a safe and nurturing Priory College.

### College Mission Statement

Priory Integrated College welcomes children from all traditions, cultures and abilities. Together, we aim to empower every child to reach their full potential, in a nurturing, caring environment which upholds respect and excellence for all.

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## Foreword

Here at Priory Integrated College, 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 the college, who will be happy to help. Open communication and regular engagement between the college staff and the wide range of users is vital to the effective management of the school. We welcome open communication with our staff.

You can speak to college staff by:

- contacting the college by telephone on 028 9042 3481. You will be asked who you would like to speak to and for your contact details, so that if the staff member is busy, they can call you back;
- contacting the college by email at [info@priorycollege.holywood.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@priorycollege.holywood.ni.sch.uk). Please indicate who you are, your contact details and who you would like to speak with;
- contacting the college by letter, directing it to the member of staff at Priory Integrated College with whom you want to communicate. You can leave your letter into the college office, or you can post it to:

Priory Integrated College  
My Lady's Mile  
Holywood  
Co Down  
BT18 9ER

If you have any concerns about your child in school, it is advisable to talk initially to their Form Tutor or Subject Teacher as soon as possible. They will seek assistance from the Head of Year or a member of the Senior Leadership Team if appropriate. The Principal will address issues that fall outside the remit of other members of staff, or concerns that remain unresolved. We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

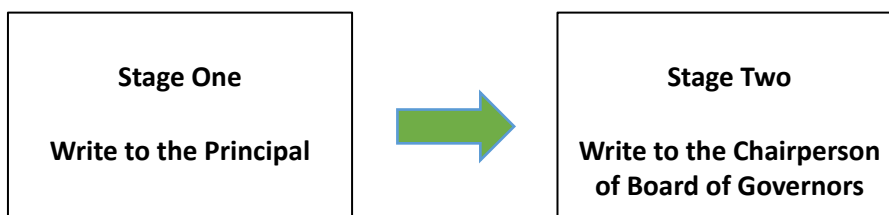
## **Aims**

When dealing with complaints the college 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 and privacy
- fully address complaints and provide an effective response
- take appropriate action to rectify the issue and prevent it happening again where appropriate
- be responsible for learning from outcomes which will inform and improve productivity within the college

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

## Complaints Procedure – at a glance



### 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 college Principal who will arrange for the complaint to be recorded and investigated. *If the complaint is about the Principal, proceed to Stage Two.* The college requires complaints to be made in writing, where this may present difficulties, please contact the college 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 college 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 One, the complaint may be progressed to Stage Two 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 Priory Integrated College and marked 'private and confidential'). Where this may present difficulties, please contact the college 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 with 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 Service 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: 028 9023 3821

Freephone: 0800 34 34 24

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 the Board of Governors will advise on the appropriate procedure to use when the complaint is raised.

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

Exceptions	Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school</li></ul>	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Operations and Estates Dale Hanna
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)</li></ul>	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Children and Young People's Services Dr Clare Mangan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● School Development Proposals</li></ul>	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Education Michele Whey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Child Protection / Safeguarding</li></ul>	Contact <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk">www.eani.org.uk</a> Director of Children and Young People's Service Dr Clare Mangan

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*).

## **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 One** – normally acknowledge within 5 school working days, response normally within 20 school working days

**Stage Two** – 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.***



## **Making a complaint**

### **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 have 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.**

