Dickson Primary School

Complaints Procedure and Policy

Date Ratified by Governors: February 2026

Date for Renewal: January 2029

We at Dickson Primary aim to create a safe, caring and reflective learning environment where teachers teach, and children learn. Each child will be nurtured to fulfil their intellectual, spiritual, physical, social and emotional potential. Central to this is a commitment to Christian values, the building an understanding of worth and value of each child and the development of self-respect and respect of others. We aim to build an atmosphere of resilience and trust, independence, creativity and fun. An inclusive school where happy children are happy learners.

Here at Dickson Primary and Nursery Unit, we take complaints seriously. We have the best interests of all our pupils and their families at the centre of all we do. We encourage anyone with a concern to speak to us as soon as possible. If issues are dealt with at an early stage, then they are more likely to be resolved, leaving no unnecessary dissatisfaction. We welcome communication with our staff. Parents / carers can do this by contacting staff as outlined below: We take all issues seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

1. Communication Chart

The school secretary – Mrs C Thompson

Tel. 02838325302 email. cthompson997@c2kni.net



Your child's class teacher - _____

Tel. 02838325302



School Principal - Mrs E Williamson

Tel. 02838325302 email. ewilliamson844@c2kni.net

OR

School Vice Principal - Mrs G Thompson

Tel. 02838325302 email. gthompson650@c2kni.net

If you wish to make a complaint, please follow the School Complaints Procedure attached.

DICKSON PRIMARY AND NURSERY UNIT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Adopted by Board of Governors on: January 2026

To be reviewed on: January 2029

2. Scope of the Complaints Procedure

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

2.1 Complaints with Established Procedures

Our school Complaints Procedure sets out how any expression of dissatisfaction relating to the school will be managed. By taking complaints seriously at the earliest possible stage, it is hoped that they 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

This procedure should not be used for complaints with separate established procedures; however, if your complaint relates to the school's failure to correctly administer any of these procedures, then you may complain by means of this procedure.

Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms, which are not part of the school'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 a complaint is raised.

Exceptions

• Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school

• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

• School Development Proposals

• Child Protection / Safeguarding

2.2 Anonymous Complaints

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints, unless deemed by the chairperson of the board of governors to be of a very serious nature. The decision to deal with such complaints will be at the discretion of the chairperson of the board of governors.

3. Aims of the Complaints Procedure

3.1. When dealing with Complaints

Our school aims to:

• Encourage resolution as quickly as possible;

• Provide timely responses;

• Keep complainants informed of progress;

• Ensure a full and fair investigation of your complaint;

• 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;

• Be responsive to learning from outcomes that will inform and improve practice within the school.

• Provide a process that is simple to understand and use;

• be impartial;

• be non-adversarial.

3.2. Availability of Procedure

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

4. Complaints Procedure – At a Glance

4.1. Time Limit

To enable complaints to be resolved, please contact the school as soon as possible. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered within 6 months of the date of the incident(s) about which you are complaining.

4.2. 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.

When writing your complaint, please provide clear information and include the following:

• Your name and contact details

• What your complaint is about – please try to be specific

• What you have already done to try to resolve it and

• What you would like the school to do to resolve your complaint

The principal will normally acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible but within 10 school working days. This will be a short response, and you will be sent a copy of, (or a link to) the school's complaints procedure. A final response will normally be made within 20 school working days of receipt of the complaint. This response will be issued in writing and will indicate with reasons whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. If, for any reason, the consideration 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.

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.

4.3. Stage Two

If your complaint is about the principal or if the complaint is unresolved after Stage One, write to the chairperson of the board of governors. Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process. The letter can be left at the school office in a sealed envelope, marked 'private and confidential' and must be addressed to the Chairperson. Any investigation into a stage two complaint can only commence when the Chairperson is in receipt of a written letter. The chairperson will convene a committee to consider the complaint.

In the case of the complaint being about the principal, this committee will investigate the complaint.

Please provide clear information and include the following:

• Reason(s) why you disagree with the stage one findings

• Any aspect in which you think that the school's complaints procedure was not fully followed

The chairperson of the committee will normally acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible but at least within 10 school working days. A final response will normally be made within 20 school working days from date of receipt of the second letter. The response will be issued by the chairperson of the committee and 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, complainants 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.

4.4. Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) www.nipso.org.uk

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 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 provided below.

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

5.1. 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.

5.2. Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint

When 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

5.3. Rights of parties involved during the investigation

Where a meeting is arranged, parties may be accompanied but not represented by another person.

Complainant: - should be informed that they 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. If the complainant feels unable to speak on their own behalf, they may avail of support from outside agencies as agreed with the school. (Local MLAs / Councillors / Citizens' Advice Bureau / Parenting NI / Children's commissioner)

Staff Members: - should be informed that they may be accompanied or represented by another person during the process e.g. union representative, colleague

Pupils: permission should be sought from parents / guardians and parent, guardian or other nominated adult should accompany pupils.

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.

5.4. Timeframes

Stage One – Normally acknowledge as soon as possible but at least within 10 school working days, with final response normally provided within 20 school working days

Stage Two – Normally acknowledge as soon as possible but at least within 10 school working days, with final response normally provided within 20 school working days

If, for any reason, the consideration / review of a complaint takes longer to complete, complainants 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.

5.5. 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.

5.6. 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 complaint procedure having been completed and the complaint has been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied. The school 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.

Any decision to treat a complainant as unreasonable must take into account the need to ensure that the complaints procedure is being fairly applied and every attempt has been made to communicate and address concerns about behaviour/conduct with the complainant. In the event that such a decision has been taken, the complainant will be advised accordingly.