

# LURGAN COLLEGE



## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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## **1. FOREWORD FROM THE HEADMASTER**

*The motto of Lurgan College is 'Meliora Sequor' which means 'to follow better things'. As our motto exhorts us to strive constantly for improvement, we rely heavily on feedback from all of our stakeholders.*

*In this regard we encourage any of our stakeholders with a concern to speak to us as soon as possible. It is our experience that, if concerns are dealt with at an early stage, they are more likely to be resolved sooner to everyone's satisfaction.*

*Many issues can be addressed simply by talking to the relevant staff in school who will be more than happy to help. Open communication and regular engagement between the school, parents/guardians and other stakeholders is vital to the effective management of our school.*

*We welcome open communication with our staff; parents/guardians can speak to staff by contacting the school office:*

*Telephone: 028 3832 2083*

*Address: Lurgan College  
College Walk  
Lurgan  
Co Armagh  
BT666 JW*

*Email: [info@lurgancollege.lurgan.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@lurgancollege.lurgan.ni.sch.uk)*

*If you have a concern about your child, you should raise it or talk to the teacher / head of year as soon as possible. You should also feel free to contact me directly at any time.*

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

**T D ROBINSON  
HEADMASTER**

## 2. AIMS

When dealing with complaints we aim to:

- 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 your complaint 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 on the school's website or is available from the school on request.

### **3. SCHOOL'S COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

#### **3.1 Complaint about a Teacher (other than the Principal)**

##### **3.1.1 Informal Stage**

###### ***Step 1 - Speaking with Teacher***

In the first instance, a complaint should normally be raised verbally with the teacher concerned, so that s/he 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.

###### ***Step 2 - Speaking with the Principal***

If your complaint remains unresolved following Step 1, 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 s/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.

##### **3.1.2 Formal Stage**

###### ***Step 3- Writing to the Principal***

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to have your complaint resolved through the informal processes proposed at Steps 1 and 2, or indeed it might be more appropriate to initiate the procedures at Step 3. You should write to the Principal, 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 20 working days from the date on which your letter was received). The investigation may require you to meet the Principal and due notification will be given of such meetings. The Principal may also talk to the parties relevant to the complaint.

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

If you believe that your complaint has not been dealt with in a satisfactory manner following the completion of Steps 1, 2 and 3, you should write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, including, if applicable, copies of the original correspondence relating to Step 3. 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.

Your written complaint should be as concise as possible and address 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:

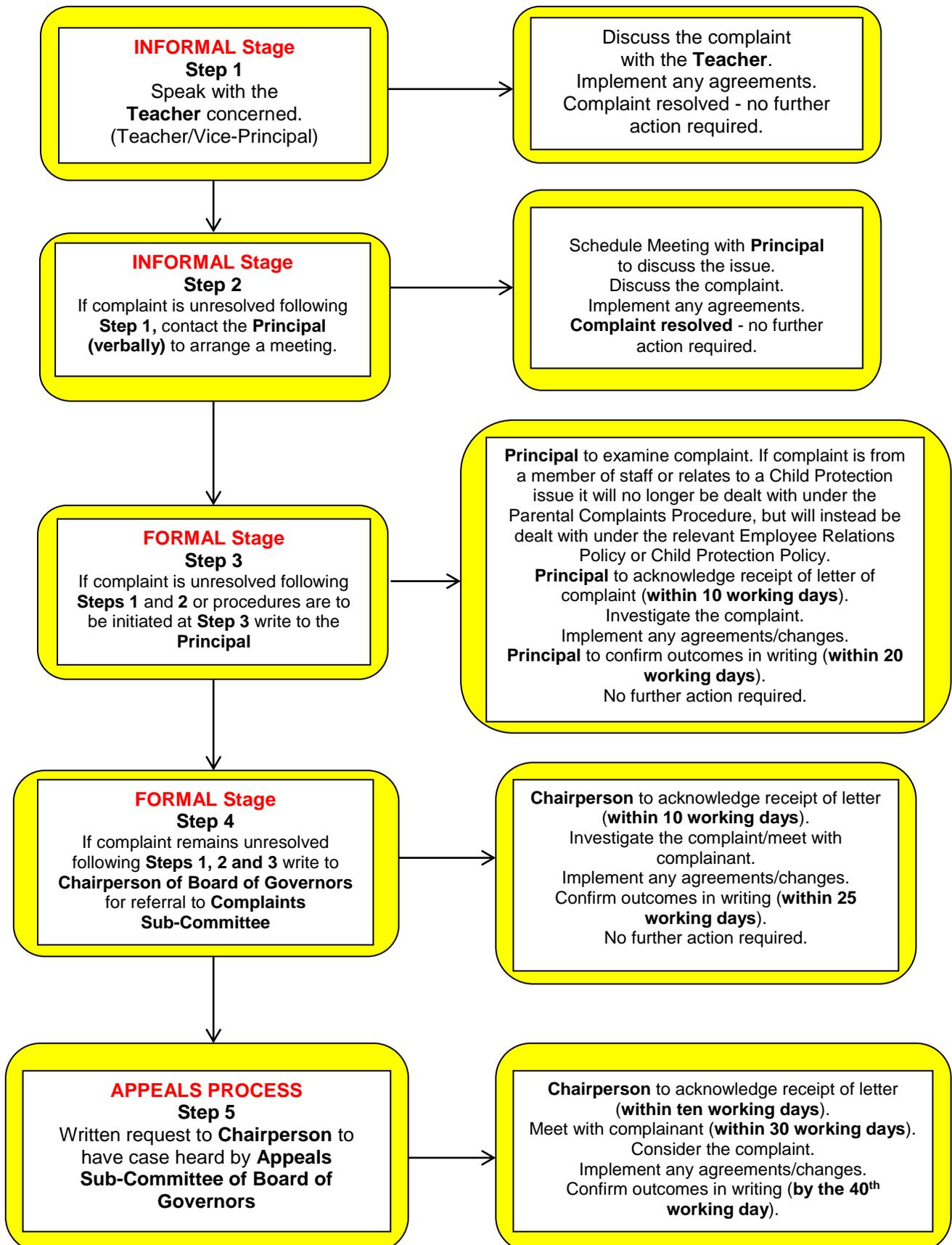
- provide a response to the issue(s) you raised; or
- state that your complaint is being fully investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 25 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received).

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.

#### ***Step 5 - Appeals Process***

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors, you may appeal the decision to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

**Making a complaint about a Teacher (other than the Principal) (with timescales for responses).**



## **3.2 Complaint about a member of the School's Support Staff**

### **3.2.1 Informal stage**

#### ***Step 1- Raising verbally with the Principal***

A complaint concerning a member of the school's support staff should be raised verbally with the Principal. A meeting should be arranged 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 s/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.

### **3.2.2 Formal Stage**

#### ***Step 2- Writing to the Principal***

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to have your complaint resolved through the informal processes proposed at Step 1 or it might be more appropriate to initiate the procedures formally. You should write to the Principal, 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 20 working days from the date on which your letter was received). The investigation may require you to meet the Principal and due notification will be given of such meetings. The Principal may also talk to the parties relevant to the complaint.

#### ***Step 3 - Writing to Chairperson of the Board of Governors***

If you believe that your complaint has not been dealt with in a satisfactory manner following the completion of Steps 1, and 2 you should write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, including, if applicable, copies of the original correspondence relating to Step 2. 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.

Your written complaint should be as concise as possible and address 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:

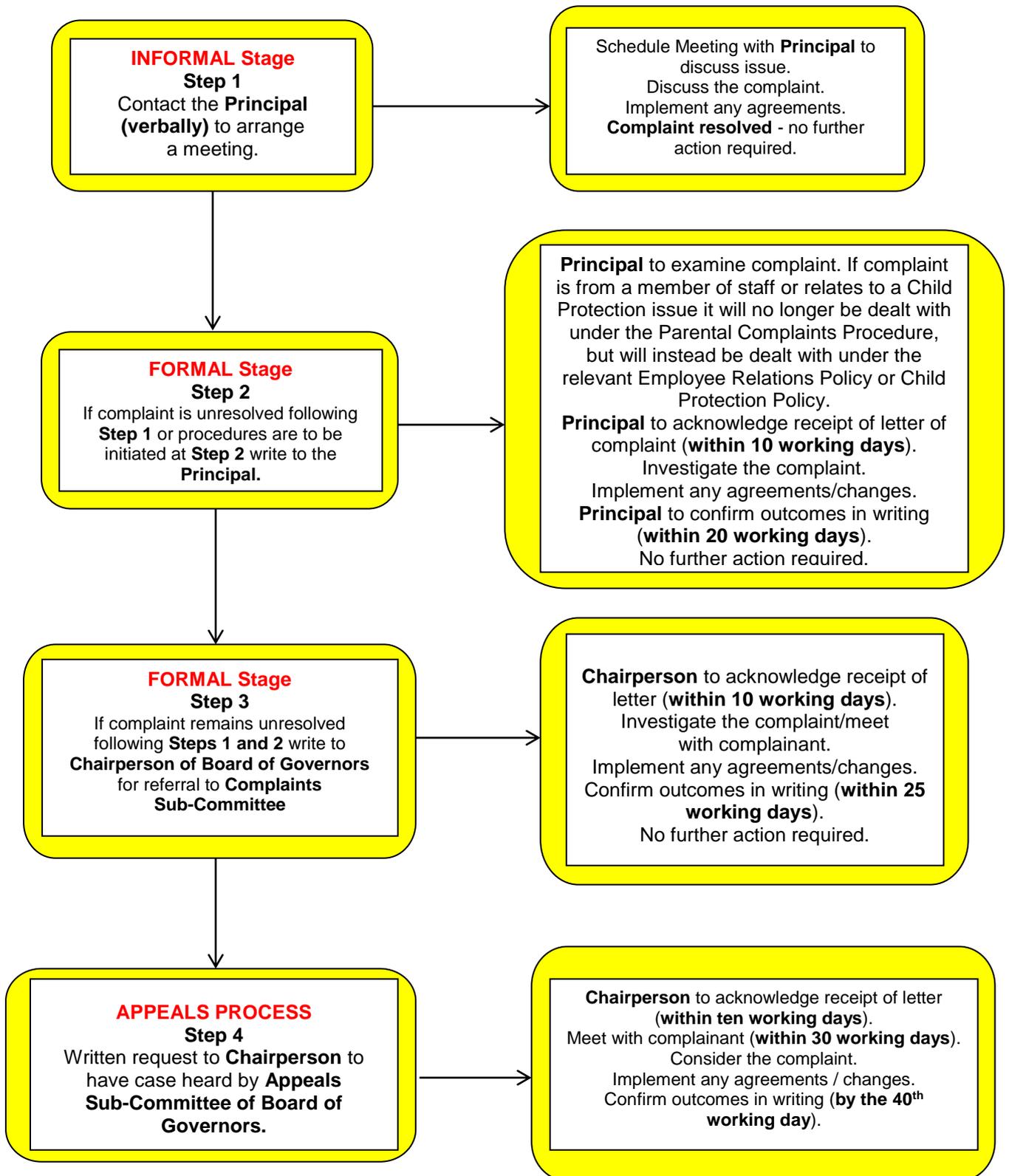
- provide a response to the issue(s) you raised; or
- state that your complaint is being fully investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 25 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received).

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.

#### ***Step 4- Appeals Process***

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors, you may appeal the decision to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

Making a complaint about a member of the school’s support staff (**with timescales for responses**).



### **3.3 Complaint about the Principal**

**Where a complaint relates to the Principal the matter will be dealt with formally by the Board of Governors.**

#### **3.3.1 Formal Stage**

##### ***Step 1 - Writing to Chairperson of the Board of Governors***

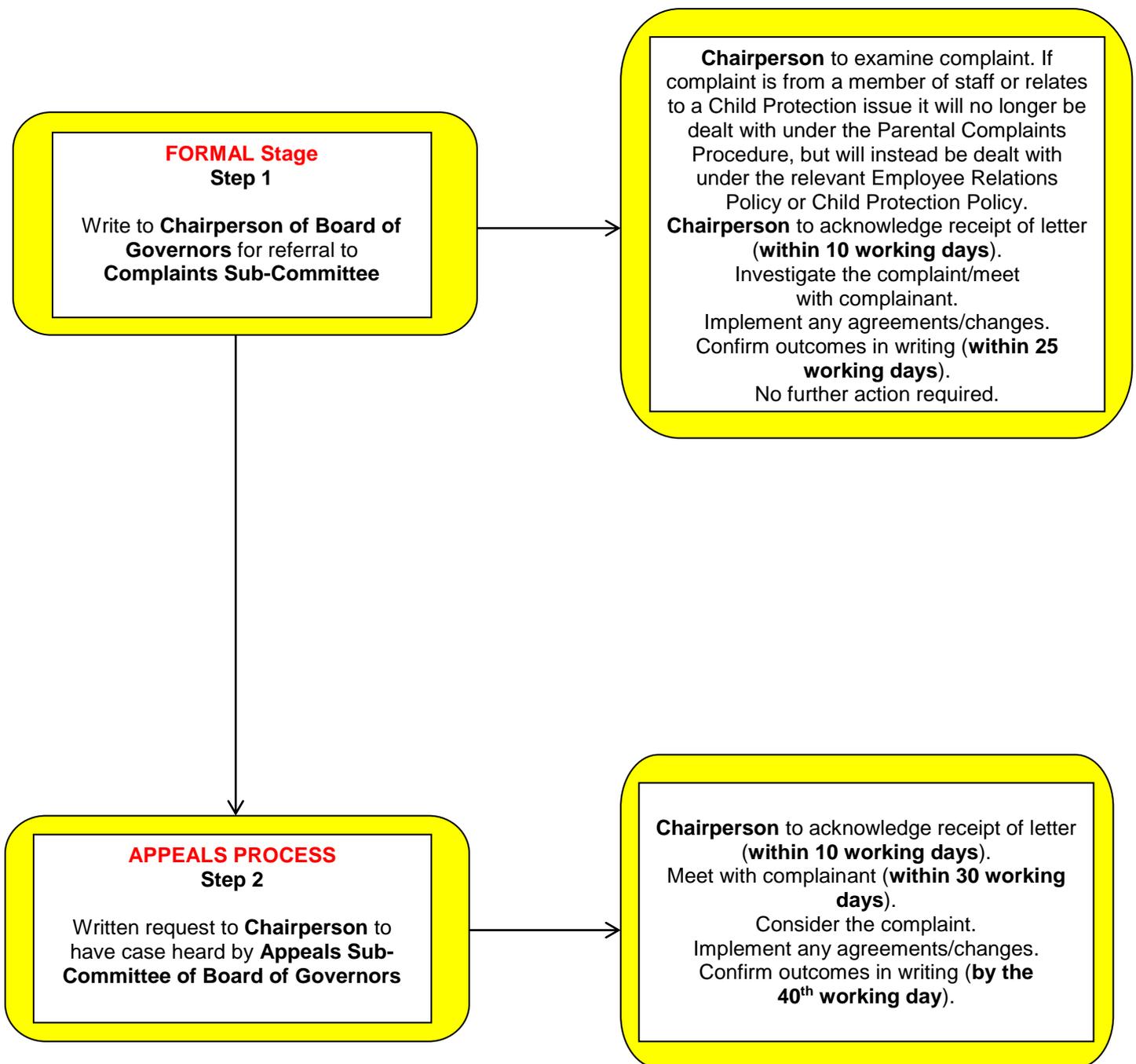
Where a complaint relates to the Principal you should write to the Chair of the Board of Governors, stating the grounds for your complaint as concisely as possible. The Chairperson will be responsible for referring your complaint to a Complaints Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors, which will investigate and respond to your complaint. The Complaints Sub-Committee will have a minimum of three voting members. You will receive 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 fully investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 25 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received).

##### ***Step 2 - Appeals Process***

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors, you may appeal the decision to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

Making a complaint about the Principal (**with timescales for responses**).



**STATUTORY STATEMENT FROM THE NORTHERN IRELAND  
PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN (NIPSO)**

If you remain dissatisfied with how your complaint has been dealt with by the school, 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](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)

Web: [www.nipso.org.uk](http://www.nipso.org.uk)

## 4. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

4.1 The Complaints Handling Procedure sets out how any expression of dissatisfaction relating to the school will be managed. By taking concerns raised by parents or others seriously at the earliest possible stage, we hope to resolve issues quickly and effectively.

4.2 Complaints with separate established procedures

Some examples of established procedures or appeal mechanisms are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. The Headmaster / Chair of Governors may advise you on the appropriate procedure to use when you raise your complaint.

*You may still take your complaint to NIPSO, should you remain dissatisfied upon completion of one of these procedures.*

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



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

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

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

In dealing with your complaint we will ensure that you receive:

- Fair treatment;
- Courtesy;
- A timely response;
- Accurate advice;
- Respect for your privacy – complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility that we may have to consult with other appropriate parties about your complaint; and
- Clear reasons for our decisions.

### **5.2 Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint**

In making your complaint you should:

- Raise issues in a timely manner
- Treat our staff with respect and courtesy
- Provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues you raise
- 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 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.

### **5.4 Timeframes**

Timeframes are outlined in the flow-charts detailed in the ‘School Complaint Procedure Section’ above.

### **5.5 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 has 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, we may choose not to respond.