



METHODIST COLLEGE BELFAST

PARENTAL CONTACT WITH THE SCHOOL ABOUT CONCERNS OR PROBLEMS - COMPLAINTS POLICY

Stage 1 – Contact a Teacher

Any problem or concern should be raised promptly with your son's/daughter's Tutor. If your concern is of a particularly serious or sensitive nature, you may prefer to discuss it with a member of staff responsible for the area you are concerned about, for example, the relevant Head of Form, Head of Department or Deputy Head of Pastoral Care. All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem promptly at this informal stage. It is our experience that most concerns and potential complaints can best be resolved through informal discussion.

Members of staff will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and will explain their own actions to you. They will discuss how the concern can be best addressed. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view but it will help both you and the school to understand both sides of the question. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

Stage 2 – Contacting a Senior Member of Staff

If you are dissatisfied with the response you receive, you can bring the matter to the attention of the senior member of staff with responsibility for the particular area in which you have a concern: the relevant Head of Department or Head of Section or the Head of Pastoral Care. This should be done within the five working days of the first discussion about your concern. You may be invited to come into school to discuss your concern and it may be appropriate for another member of staff to be present. The senior member of staff will carry out an investigation where this is necessary or would prove helpful and will seek to resolve the matter to your satisfaction.

Stage 3 – Contacting the Principal

If you remain dissatisfied after your contact with the senior member of staff, you can bring the matter to the attention of the Principal. This can be done by making an appointment to discuss the problem or you may wish to put your concerns in writing to the Principal. You should make contact with the Principal's Office within ten working days of your discussion with the senior member of staff, making it clear if you wish the matter to be dealt with as a complaint.

The Principal may ask a Vice-Principal to conduct a full investigation of the complaint and to interview any members of staff or pupils involved or he may deal with the matter himself. In both cases, you will receive a written response to your complaint which you may wish to discuss with the Vice-Principal or the Principal.

If the matter has been investigated by a Vice-Principal and you remain dissatisfied, you should arrange an appointment with the Principal.

If your original concern was about an action by the Principal, you should put your complaint in writing to the Chairman of the Board of Governors (stage 4).

Stage 4 – Contacting the Chairman of the Board of Governors

If you are not satisfied with the Principal's response, you may contact the Chairman of the Board of Governors. The Chairman's name and how to contact him/her, is available from the Principal's Office. You must provide details of the complaint in writing and this should be lodged with the Chairman within ten working days of the issue of the written response by the Principal.

The Chairman will investigate your complaint and, in most cases, seek to resolve the matter through discussion with you and the Principal. At the end of this stage the Chairman will provide you with a written response.

Stage 5 – Contacting the Board of Governors

If you are not satisfied with the Chairman's response at the end of stage 4, the complaint can be referred to the Board of Governors by writing to the Chairman or Secretary of the Board. You must provide full details of your complaint, setting out the specific grounds for dissatisfaction with the handling or the outcome of the complaint. The Board of Governors will ask a small panel of governors to investigate your complaint. You may be invited to speak to the panel at a meeting and be accompanied by a friend or representative. After the meeting you will be advised of the outcome in writing.

The decision of the Board of Governors is final.

If you remain dissatisfied you may refer your complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman.

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