

Oakgrove Integrated Primary School & Nursery

Complaints Policy



Date: September 2023

Signed: _____ **Chair of Governors**

Review Date: Sept 2026

Oakgrove Integrated Primary School and Nursery is committed to ***celebrating diversity*** in all aspects of school life through nurturing a love of learning and providing engaging

opportunities in an inclusive environment where the aim for every child is that they might achieve their full potential. We are consistently ***learning together for life*** by developing the abilities and talents of every child, fostering respect, confidence and creativity.

As an all-inclusive, UNICEF Rights Respecting integrated primary school, Oakgrove IPSN promotes the holistic development of every pupil. Care, welfare and safeguarding are the foundations that underpin the positive behaviour management within the school. Oakgrove IPSN provides a learning environment in which pupils feel safe and happy at school, and are challenged in their learning. Through careful planning, monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision, Oakgrove IPSN ensures that the learning environment encourages pupils to realise their potential and achieve success in all aspects of school life. This is communicated to pupils, parents and staff annually through presentations and is also displayed within the school.

At Oakgrove IPSN, we take complaints very seriously. We have the best interests of all our pupils, families and staff 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 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; you can speak to staff by:

- A short note in the school homework diary
- A brief chat with the teacher in the before or after class time
- Making an appointment with the relevant member of staff through the office (if time is needed to discuss an issue)
- Contacting the Principal or Vice Principal in person or making an appointment through the office.
- Sending a letter to the relevant member of staff.

If you have any issues please talk to the teacher as soon as possible. Concerns about matters other than in the classroom should be raised with the Principal or Vice Principal. We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

1. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE The Board of Governors together with the Principal set the direction and tone of the school in all that they do and are committed to working with parents in the best interests of their children's education. The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to address complaints raised by parents/guardians.

1.1. The procedure covers all matters relating to the actions of staff employed in the school and the application of school procedures, where they affect individual pupils. However, school staff, and the Board of Governors, recognise the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest possible stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

1.2. Where it becomes evident at an early stage that a matter should be dealt with according to other established procedures or appeals mechanisms, this Complaints Procedure should be set aside

in favour of the agreed procedure such as Child Protection, Special Education, Admissions, Suspensions and Expulsions, Grievance, Discipline, Bullying and Harassment.

1.3. The school will not investigate anonymous complaints, unless deemed by the school to be of a serious nature. Anonymous complaints may be investigated where they relate to alleged Child Protection matters or alleged financial impropriety. This will be at the discretion of the school.

2. AIMS

2.1. In operating this complaints procedure, we aim to:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- allow swift handling of a complaint within established time-limits for action;
- keep people informed of progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation;
- have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved;
- respect confidentiality
- fully address all aspects of a complaint and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary; and
- in the interest of continuous improvement, provide relevant information to the school's Senior Management Team and Board of Governors.

2.2. This procedure is designed to be:

- easily accessible and publicised;
- simple to understand and use;
- impartial; and
- non-adversarial.

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

3. WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE

3.1. 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
- reasons for our decisions.

Where the complaint is upheld we will acknowledge this and address the complaint you have raised. If, after investigation, it is judged there are no grounds for your complaint, you will be advised accordingly.

3.2. Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint In making your complaint we would expect that you:

- Raise issues in a timely manner;
- Treat our staff with respect and courtesy;
- Provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issue you raise; and
- Use these procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels.

3.3. Rights of parties involved during the investigation The process is non-adversarial and does not provide a role for any other statutory or non-statutory body. Complainant Where a meeting is arranged the complainant may be accompanied by another person where it is accepted, by the Board of Governors and the Principal, that this will assist the investigation and resolution of the complaint Staff Staff may seek the advice and support from their professional body or Trade Union and may also be accompanied by another person to meetings where it is accepted, by the Board of Governors and the Principal, that this will assist the investigation and resolution of the complaint. A member of staff who is the subject of a complaint will be provided with full details of any allegations made against him/her before being required to respond to the matters raised. On many occasions this may be best achieved by providing the member of staff with a copy of the letter. However, the views of the complainant will be sought before doing so. Legal Representation Legal representation, or representation by a person acting in a professional capacity is not permitted within this procedure. This procedure does not take away from the statutory rights of any of the participants.

3.4. Where the complainant is a Governor Where the complainant is a member of the Board of Governors, s/he will play no part in the management, or appeal, of the complaint as set out in this Procedure.

4. MAKING A COMPLAINT

4.1. Complaint about a teacher (other than the Principal)

4.1.1. Informal Stage

Step 1 – Speaking with the 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 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.

4.1.2. Formal Stage

Stage 3 – Writing to the Principal

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to have your complaint resolved through the informal processes proposed at Stages 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 the 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:

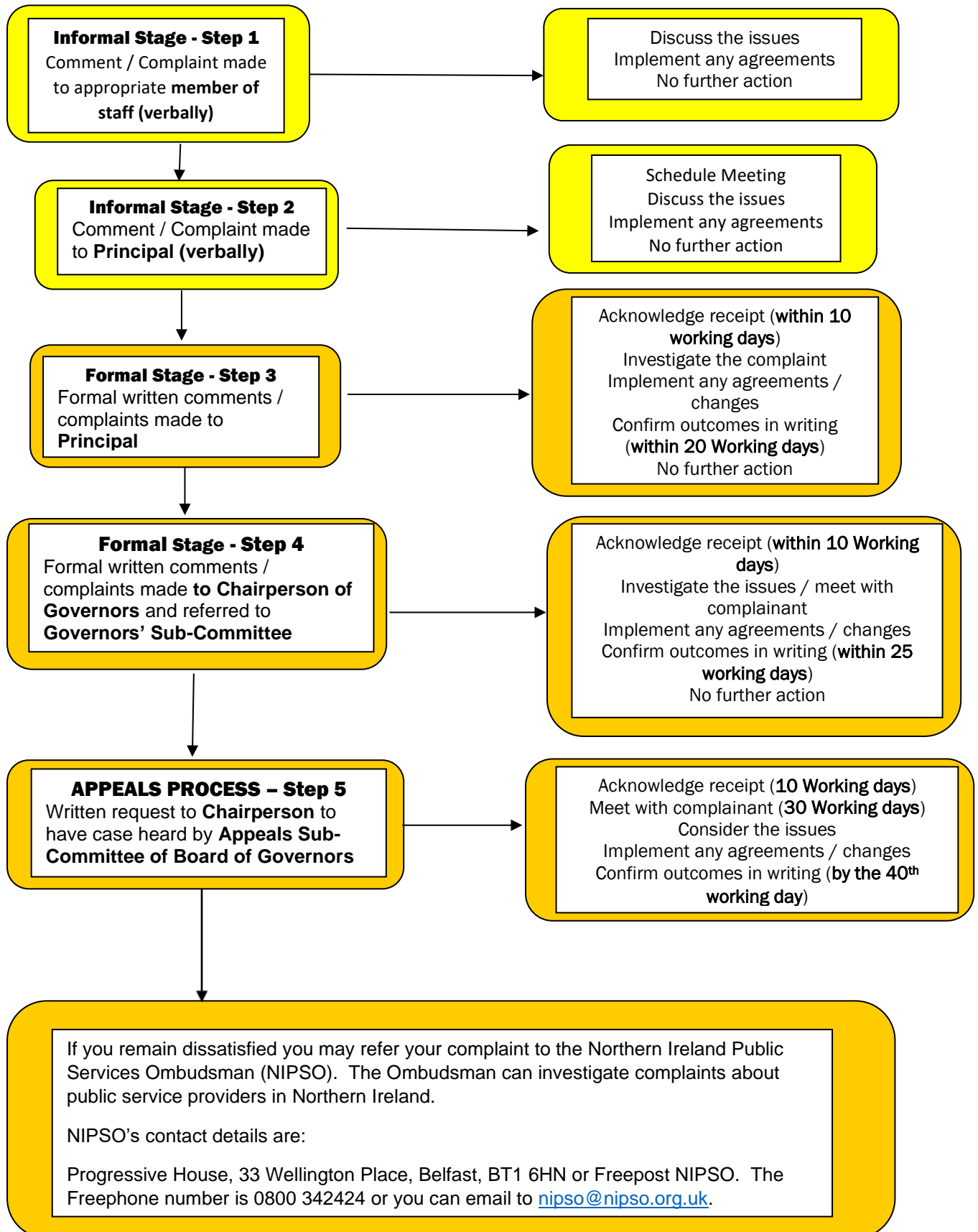
- provide a response to the issue(s) your raised; or
- state that your complaint is being fully investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 25 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received).

The investigation may require you to meet with 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. This procedure is outlined in Appendix 1.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FLOW CHART (With timescale for responses)



4.1.3. 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.

4.1.4. Formal Stage

Step 2 – Writing to the Principal

Sometimes it will not be possible to have your complaint resolved through the informal process outlined in 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) 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

Step 3 – Writing to the 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:

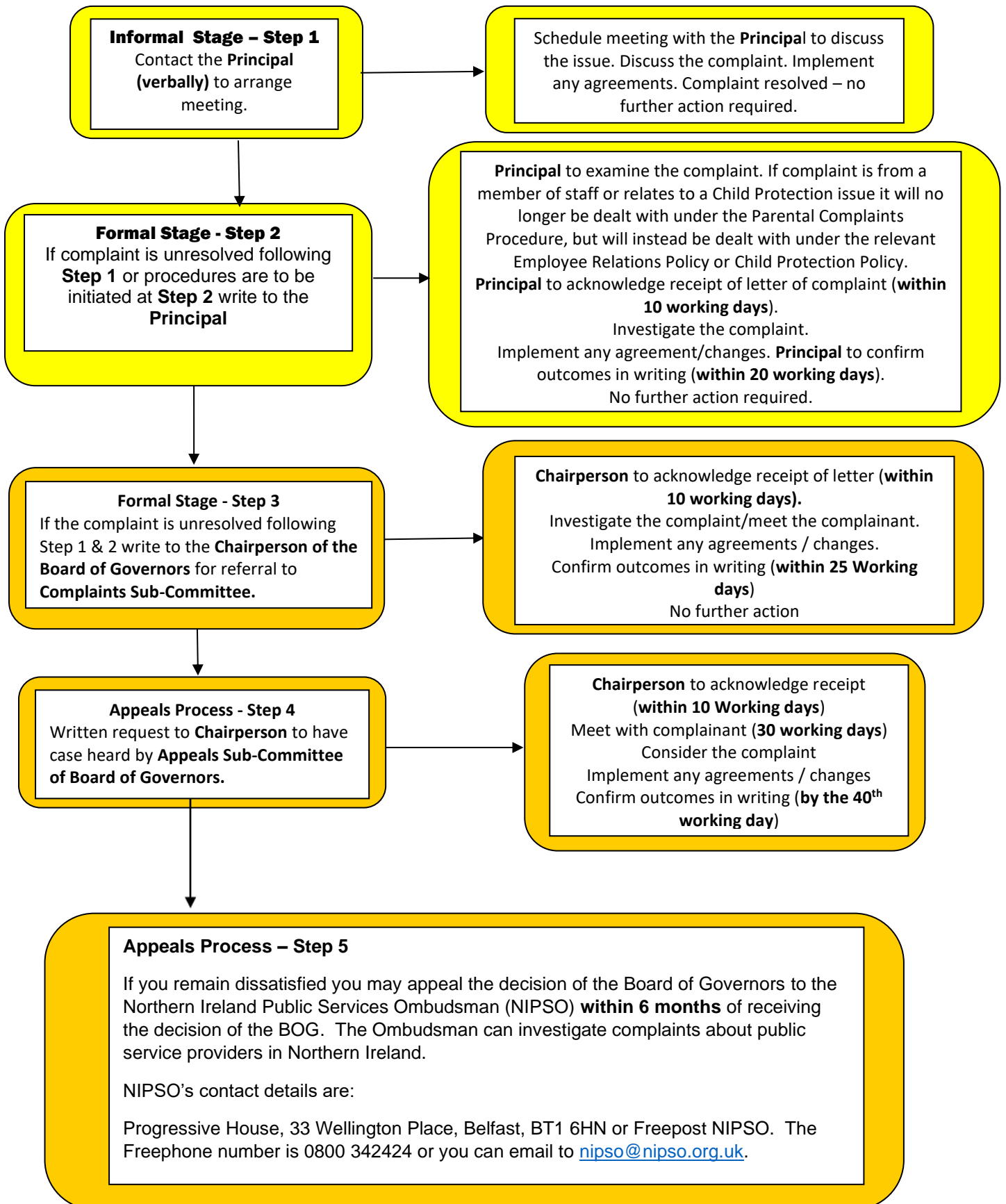
- Provide a response to the issue(s) you raised; or
- State that your complaint is being fully investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 25 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received).

The investigation may require you to meet with 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. This procedure is outlined in Appendix 1

OIPSN COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FLOW CHART about a member of the school's support staff (With timescale for responses)



4.2. Complaint about the Principal

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

4.2.1. Formal Stage

Step 1 – Writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors

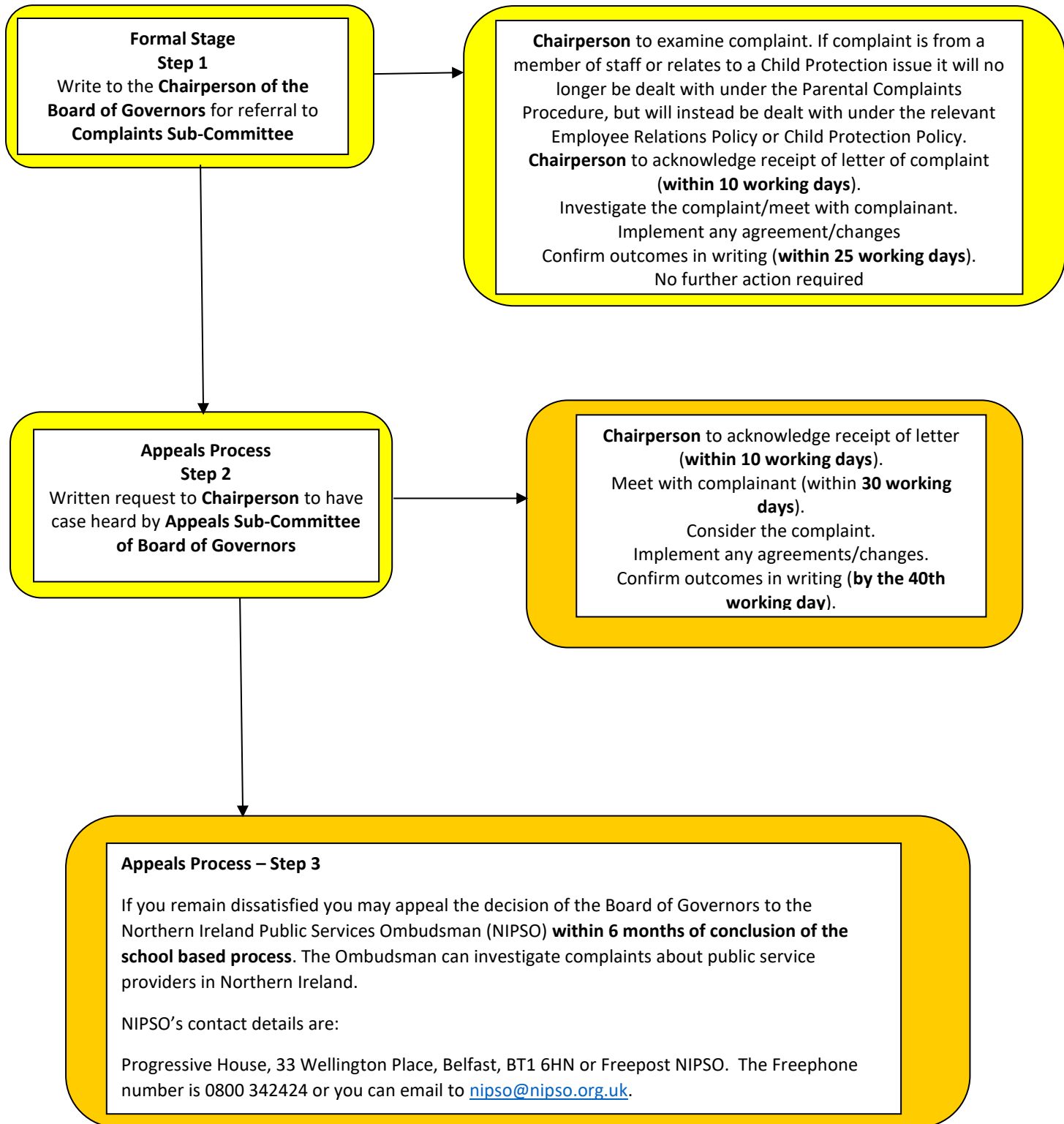
Where a complaint relates to the Principal you should write to the Chair of the Board of Governors, stating the grounds for your complaint as concisely as possible. The Chairperson will be responsible for referring your complaint to a Complaints Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors, which will investigate 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. This process is outlined in Appendix 1.

OIPSN COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FLOW CHART about the Principal (With timescale for responses)



5. RECORD KEEPING

The Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Governors will maintain a record of all correspondence, conversations and meetings, concerning your complaint. These records will be held confidentially in the school and will be kept apart from pupil records. All such records will be destroyed **three years after the date of the last correspondence on the issue.**

6. FRIVOLOUS OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

Where the Board of Governors considers the actions of a parent / group of parents to constitute a frivolous or vexatious complaint, it will seek legal advice in order to protect staff from further such actions.

Policy Review

This policy was ratified by the Board of Governors of Oakgrove IPSN on: _____

Chairperson signed: _____

This policy will be reviewed on or before Sept 2026

Appendix 1

APPEALS PROCESS – APPEALS SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors, you may write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors within ten working days of receiving written feedback from the Complaints Sub-Committee, appealing their decision. Your written request should be as concise as possible and set out specifically the grounds for your appeal.

The Chairperson will be responsible for establishing an Appeals Sub-Committee comprising of at least three members of the Board of Governors who were not involved in the original investigation. You will be invited to a meeting of the Appeals Sub-Committee where your appeal will be heard.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within ten working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received and provide you with the date and time of the meeting with the Appeals Sub-Committee at which you will have an opportunity to explain the grounds for your appeal. This meeting will normally take place within 30 working days of your appeal request having been received.

Within ten working days of this meeting, you should expect a final written response. This will indicate the Governors' findings, their recommendations and the reasons supporting their decisions. The letter will also advise you that, if you remain dissatisfied, you may refer the matter to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman within 6 months.

APPEALS PROCESS – NORTHERN IRELAND PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN

If at the end of the formal, school-based process you feel that you have been treated unfairly, or that you have received a poor service and your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction, you may make a complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

The Ombudsman can consider complaints about maladministration. The term maladministration is not defined but is generally taken to mean poor administration or the wrong application of rules. The Ombudsman can also consider complaints about professional judgement and clinical decisions which have been made by health and social care professionals.

Some examples that the Ombudsman may regard as maladministration include:

- Avoidable delay
- Faulty procedures or failing to follow the correct procedures
- Not telling someone about any rights of appeal they have
- Unfairness, bias or prejudice
- Giving advice that is misleading or inadequate
- Refusing to answer reasonable questions
- Discourtesy and failure to apologise properly for errors
- Mistakes in handling a complaint

The above list is not exhaustive.

Further information on making a complaint can be found at www.nipso.org.uk or by calling (028) 9023 3821 or Freephone 0800 34 34 24