



Northern Ireland

**Public Services**

Ombudsman

# **Investigation of a complaint against a Primary School**

**Report Reference: 202004565**

The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

33 Wellington Place

BELFAST

BT1 6HN

Tel: 028 9023 3821

Email: [nipso@nipso.org.uk](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)

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

## **The Role of the Ombudsman**

The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) provides a free, independent and impartial service for investigating complaints about public service providers in Northern Ireland.

The role of the Ombudsman is set out in the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the 2016 Act). The Ombudsman can normally only accept a complaint after the complaints process of the public service provider has been exhausted.

The Ombudsman may investigate complaints about maladministration on the part of listed authorities, and on the merits of a decision taken by health and social care bodies, general health care providers and independent providers of health and social care. The purpose of an investigation is to ascertain if the matters alleged in the complaint properly warrant investigation and are in substance true.

Maladministration is not defined in the legislation, but is generally taken to include decisions made following improper consideration, action or inaction; delay; failure to follow procedures or the law; misleading or inaccurate statements; bias; or inadequate record keeping.

The Ombudsman must also consider whether maladministration has resulted in an injustice. Injustice is also not defined in legislation but can include upset, inconvenience, or frustration. A remedy may be recommended where injustice is found as a consequence of the failings identified in a report.

## **Reporting in the Public Interest**

This report is published pursuant to section 44 of the 2016 Act which allows the Ombudsman to publish an investigation report when it is in the public interest to do so.

The Ombudsman has taken into account the interests of the person aggrieved and other persons prior to publishing this report.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
SUMMARY .....	4
THE COMPLAINT .....	5
INVESTIGATION METHODOLOGY .....	6
THE INVESTIGATION .....	6
CONCLUSION .....	16
APPENDICES .....	18
Appendix 1 – The Principles of Good Administration	
Appendix 2 – The Principles of Good Complaints Handling	

**Case Reference:** 202004565

**Listed Authority:** A Primary School

## **SUMMARY**

The complainant raised concerns about how the school investigated a complaint relating to the performance and conduct of her daughter's teacher during Primary 5.

The investigation established the following maladministration:

- The Board of Governors failed to demonstrate how senior management properly addressed the concerns raised by the complainant about whether their actions were appropriate.
- The Board of Governors failed to give full consideration to a psychologist's report provided by the complainant and include their rationale for not considering the report in the final decision issued to the complainant.

I recommended the school provide the complainant a written apology for the injustice caused as a result of the maladministration identified in this report.

I made a further recommendation to bring about service improvement and to prevent future recurrence. I also recommended the school provide this Office with evidence of its compliance.

## **THE COMPLAINT**

1. This complaint was about how the school investigated a complaint relating to the performance and conduct of the complainant's daughter's teacher during Primary 5.

### **Background**

2. Due to health concerns within the family, the pupil did not return to school after lock down in September 2021. The pupil returned to school in January 2022, four months after her peers. The pupil has Special Education Need status due to dyslexia.
3. The complainant began raising concerns with senior management in February 2022 about the actions of the pupil's teacher (Teacher A) and what she considered to be emotional distress caused to the pupil.
4. The complainant raised a formal complaint with the school in June 2022 about the actions of Teacher A and also complained that there was a failure by senior management to act upon the concerns previously raised by her.
5. The school issued its final response to the complainant on 16 October 2022. The complainant does not consider the school's investigation addressed the issues that were raised.

### **Issue(s) of complaint**

6. I accepted the following issue of complaint for investigation:

**Whether the school handled the complaint in accordance with relevant guidance.**

## **INVESTIGATION METHODOLOGY**

7. In order to investigate this complaint, the Investigating Officer obtained from the school all relevant documentation together with its comments on the issues the complainant raised. This documentation included information relating to the school's complaints process.

## Relevant Standards and Guidance

8. In order to investigate complaints, I must establish a clear understanding of the standards, both of general application and those specific to the circumstances of the case. I also refer to relevant regulatory, professional, and statutory guidance.

The general standards are the Ombudsman's Principles<sup>1</sup>:

- The Principles of Good Administration
- The Principles of Good Complaints Handling

9. The specific standards and guidance referred to are those which applied at the time the events occurred. These governed the exercise of the administrative functions of those individuals whose actions are the subject of this complaint.

The specific standards and guidance relevant to this complaint are:

- The Principles of Good Complaint Handling
- The School's Complaints Policy

I enclose relevant sections of the guidance considered at Appendix three to this report.

10. In investigating a complaint of maladministration, my role is concerned primarily with an examination of the school's administrative actions. It is not my role to question the merits of a discretionary decision. That is unless my investigation identifies maladministration in the school process of making that decision.
11. I did not include all information obtained in the course of the investigation in this report. However, I am satisfied I took into account everything I considered relevant and important in reaching my findings.
12. A draft copy of this report was shared with the complainant and the school for comment on factual accuracy and the reasonableness of the findings and recommendations. In response to the draft report comments were received from the complainant and the school. These were fully considered.

---

<sup>1</sup> These principles were established through the collective experience of the public services ombudsmen affiliated to the Ombudsman Association.

## THE INVESTIGATION

### Whether the school handled the complaint in accordance with relevant guidance.

In particular this will consider:

- Whether the investigation by the school addressed the concerns raised by the complainant in respect of the pupil.
- Whether the investigation by the school addressed the concerns about Senior Management properly.
- Whether there was a failure by the school to consider the Psychologist's report.

### Detail of Complaint

*Whether the investigation by the school addressed the concerns raised by the complainant in respect of the pupil.*

13. The complainant said the school failed to conduct a proper investigation into the concerns raised about the pupil.

### The School's response to investigation enquiries

14. The school stated the complaint was heard by a panel of three governors. The complaint was dealt with in accordance with the school's complaint policy. The complaint comprised of two parts. The first part related to the pupil's teacher's (Teacher A) refusal to carry out reasonable and legitimate instructions in relation to the teaching needs of the pupil. Those instructions related to the pupil's SEN status and the support she is eligible to receive within the classroom setting due to her dyslexia. The second part related to the *'emotional distress that these non-inclusive teaching practices have caused which we (the complainant) consider have had a persistent adverse effect upon her (the pupil) psychological well-being. This has culminated most recently, in a period of acute distress and anxiety following her summer assessments.'*
15. The school stated the panel considered the above complaints and proceeded to identify these into 10 detailed heads of complaint as the terms of reference (ToR) for investigation. The school stated that in total the panel heard evidence from nine witnesses over a 12-hour period.

## Relevant school records

16. This office completed a review of the copy documentation the school provided in response to investigation enquiries. I enclose relevant extracts at Appendix five to this report.

## Analysis and Findings

### *Investigation of Complaint*

17. The complainant submitted a complaint on 7 June 2022. The complaint was passed to the Chair of the Board of Governors (BoG) on the same day. The Chair of the BoG acknowledged receipt of the complaint on 8 June 2022 and advised the complainant it would be considered at stage 2. A meeting with the complainant took place on 15 June 2022. Additional information was sent by the complainant on 17 June 2022. The school advised the complainant on 30 June 2022 that resolution of the complaint would take longer than 20 days due to the school holidays, this was acknowledged by the complainant on the same date. Additional information was provided by the complainant on 7 October 2022. A decision in relation to the complaint was issued on 16 October 2022.
18. The school's complaints policy states *'the complaint will normally be acknowledged by the Chair as soon as possible but within 10 working days. A final response will normally be made within 20 school working days from receipt of the complaint in writing. If the complaint takes longer to complete you will be informed in writing of revised time limits and kept updated on progress. These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during the summer holidays.'*
19. The complainant considered the school failed to conduct a proper investigation into the conduct of Teacher A. I viewed the school's complaints response issued on 16 October 2022. I also viewed the handwritten notes of interviews with relevant staff during the consideration of the complaint. The school broke the complaint down into 10 heads of complaint. Of the 10 issues considered, one issue of the complaint was upheld and two issues were partially upheld. Specifically, the issues which were upheld related to the ongoing concerns the complainant had regarding the performance and conduct of Teacher A, the emotional distress the non-inclusive teaching practices have caused and the repeated failure to implement SEN accommodations requested.



20. I refer to the Second Principle, Being Customer Focused. This states public bodies should listen to and consider the complainant's views, asking them to clarify where necessary to make sure the public body understands clearly what the complaint is about and the outcome the complainant wants. I also refer to the Third Principle of Good Complainant Handling, Being Open and Accountable, which states public bodies should be open and honest when accounting for their decisions and actions. They should give clear, evidence based explanations and reasons for their decisions.
21. On the basis of the information provided I am satisfied the school acted in accordance with its complaints policy. I am also satisfied the school acted in accordance with the second and third principles of good complaint handling in the investigation of this complaint. I therefore do not uphold this element of complaint.

#### *Concerns from other parents*

22. The complainant said she was aware of other children who been impacted by Teacher A's conduct but whose parents had been reluctant to formalise a complaint. The complainant requested that the school not only investigate the issues relating to the pupil but that a wider enquiry into the behaviour of Teacher A is undertaken.
23. In response to this issue the school stated '*in request of a wider enquiry, the panel has no remit to investigate beyond that of the complaint made. It would not be appropriate to seek out allegations against an employee from parents or other third parties when a complaint from one parent has been received.*'
24. I refer to the Fourth Principle of Good Complaint Handling, Acting Fairly and Proportionately, which states public bodies should ensure that decision and proportionate, appropriate and fair.
25. The complainant complained about the performance and conduct of Teacher A towards the pupil. The school investigated the complaint made in relation to the pupil. I consider the explanation and decision by school that '*the panel has no remit to investigate beyond that of the complaint made,*' to be reasonable and in accordance the fourth principle of good complaint handling. I therefore do not uphold this element of complaint.

## **Detail of Complaint**

*Whether the investigation by the school addressed the concerns about Senior Management properly.*

26. The complainant said she raised concerns with senior management (the Principal and the Vice-Principal) about Teacher A's attitude and actions towards the pupil. The complainant had an expectation senior management should have acted upon the concerns raised. The complainant considers that senior management failed in this respect and the BoG's subsequent investigation failed to adequately address this alleged failure by senior management.

## **The school's response to investigation enquiries**

27. The school stated it was the view of the Head of Preparatory School (Teacher B) and the Principal of the School (the Principal) that the engagement prior to 7 June 2022 was informal. The school said the complainant had not made an official complaint and that concerted efforts had been made to address the concerns raised. Whilst the panel had sympathy with the parents' view that they raised concerns prior to 7 June 2022, the school stated a formal complaint was not lodged until 7 June 2022. The panel felt both Teacher B and the Principal acted appropriately in line with the policies and procedures of the school.

## **Relevant school records**

28. I completed a review of copy documentation the complainant provided, and those records the school provided in response to my investigation enquiries. I enclose relevant extracts at Appendix five to this report.

## **Analysis and Findings**

29. I note the complainant's concern the senior management team failed to act upon the concerns she raised about Teacher A. I also note the school stated that engagement prior to 7 June 2022 was '*informal*' and that '*concerted efforts*' had been made to address the concerns. I acknowledge the complainant takes a differing view about the adequacy of the school's efforts.
30. I viewed the emails between the complainant and the school and note the complainant raised concerns on 17 January 2022 to the P7 teacher (Teacher C). This email exchange detailed the pupil's experience in school that day and how she was

extremely upset. The complainant asked for the comments to be passed to Teacher A and Teacher B.

31. Teacher B responded on 18 January 2022 stating he had spoken to Teacher A about the need to differentiate tasks for the pupil. Teacher B stated he met with the Vice Principal of the Preparatory Department (VP) and Teacher C to talk through the problems. Teacher B confirmed that, along with the VP, he would meet with Teacher A to talk through the issues.
32. From the information provided I note the complainant emailed Teacher B on 23 February 2022 to highlight the behaviour of Teacher A and asked whether the Principal or BoG had been made aware. The complainant emailed the Principal on 4 March 2022 with the same concerns referring to her email to Teacher B on 23 February 2022. The complainant sought to know if the concerns had been brought to the attention of senior management. The Principal responded via email on 7 March 2022 advising that Teacher B made him aware of the concerns the complainant raised and had briefed him on the action taken. The Principal also advised the BoG deals with such issues via the Formal Complaints Policy. As no complaint had been lodged in relation to Teacher A, therefore the issue had not been discussed by the BoG.
33. In an email from the Principal to the complainant dated 18 March 2022 it states '*I would like to reassure you that the concerns you have raised are being addressed in a rigorous and professional manner in line with College policies and procedures. A carefully considered, detailed and robust intervention is ongoing, with the aim of affecting an improvement in the educational service provided.*' Whilst I note this statement by the Principal, it is clear that the complainant had been unhappy with the school's actions up until that point and she continued to raise concerns. Therefore, I consider it would have been appropriate in March 2022 for the Principal to have directed the complainant to the school's complaints procedure and, at least, allowed her to make an informed choice as to whether this was an action she wished to pursue.
34. As part of the enquiries from this office, the school was asked to detail the '*strenuous efforts to effect change*' for the pupil. However the initial response stated the school was not able to disclose further details due to employer – employee confidentiality. In response to further enquiries seeking clarity on the school's efforts, the School

also informed this office that the strenuous efforts to effect change for the pupil were *'clear from the decision and the notes and documentation'* provided to NIPSO. I was surprised that this was the school's position as, having viewed the quality of the information provided to my office, I consider it is unclear what efforts were taken by senior management in relation to the concerns the complainant raised.

35. I reviewed the hand-written information provided by the school in relation to the BoG's consideration of the complaint during the meeting with the complainants. This information is difficult to read and illegible at times. I note the school's statement to this office that *'evidence is taken at pace and recorded at pace. This was not a formal court process with a stenographer.'* I accept that handwritten notes can and should be taken by the BoG members during such a meeting. There is no expectation by this office that a stenographer would be required when a BoG meets with a parent to discuss their complaint. However I do expect a clear minute of any such discussion would later be produced by the BoG. Such minutes would set out clearly the time and date of the meeting, who was in attendance and details of what was discussed and the rationale for any decisions made during that discussion.
36. I would ask the school to note there is an expectation that any public body in jurisdiction providing information to a NIPSO investigation ensures that the information is clearly presented. Any failure to do so can impact on the confidence that NIPSO can have in the rigour applied to the investigation of the complaint. From the manner in which the school provided its records to my office I can see no evidence to demonstrate how the BoG fully considered the complainant's concerns nor how it investigated this issue.
37. I refer to the Third Principle of Good Complaint Handling, Being Open and Accountable which states public bodies should provide honest, evidence based explanations and giving reasons for decisions, keeping full and accurate records. The school's response to the complaint confirms that senior management were aware of the concerns, however the response fails to detail the *'strenuous efforts'* the school suggested it was making. The response fails to detail the investigation into the actions of senior management. The response has not provided evidence to demonstrate how senior management addressed the concerns and whether their actions were appropriate. I consider the school failed to adhere to this principle and this failure constitutes maladministration.

38. I consider the identified maladministration caused the complainant to sustain the injustice of uncertainty and frustration. It also caused the pupil to sustain the injustice of uncertainty due to the difficulties she was facing on a daily basis. I therefore uphold this element of the complaint.

### **Detail of Complaint**

*Whether there was a failure by the school to consider the Psychologist's report.*

39. The complainant said the school failed to consider the report from the psychologist as part of its investigation. The complainant said the report was provided to the school on 7 October 2022, before the investigation was complete and therefore should have been considered.

### **The School's response to investigation enquiries**

1. The school stated the panel concluded hearing all evidence in this complaint on 16 September 2022. The panel took time to fully consider all the evidence before the panel chair committed their decision to writing. The decision of the panel was dated 4 October 2022. However, due to the chair's work commitments there was a delay prior to the decision being issued on 16 October 2022. The report from the psychologist was only received on 7 October 2022. The school noted the report is dated 31 September 2022 and suggested that perhaps it could have been made available to the panel earlier.
2. The school stated the complaint was made on 7 June 2022. The time between 7 June 2022 and 4 October 2022 equated to 119 days. The panel was very much conscious of the need to issue a response as soon as possible. Whilst the summer period was included in this time, the panel believed it would have been detrimental to all involved to further delay the issuing of their decision, at a point when they had heard the firsthand evidence and covered all aspects of the complaint. Each of the three panel members agreed that, due to length of time it had taken to conclude the complaint, it was in the best interests of all parties to conclude the matter without further delay. The school stated the contents of the report were noted but each panel member agreed that it didn't alter their findings.

3. The school stated the report was received on 7 October 2022, noting it was issued on 31 September 2022, there was a delay in it being provided to the panel and highlighting the panel had not been made aware that it would be forthcoming. The panel had already heard a significant amount of evidence over a protracted period and there had already been a significant delay in matters given the summer break. Noting that nearly four months had lapsed, the school stated this was significantly longer than the 20 days for Stage 2 complaint as articulated in the complaints policy. *'It was in the interest of all parties to conclude the matter as soon as possible. One has to draw the line somewhere.'* The school stated had the panel been made aware that a medical report had been sought for these purposes perhaps accommodation could have been made, but *'as the report appeared from nowhere, the panel were keen to resolve the matter as soon as reasonably practicable for all involved'*.
4. The school also stated no one doubts the pupil found returning to the classroom following both the mandatory and elective period of home schooling to be a stressful experience. *'We heard first hand evidence from the educational professionals in the school and from the parent's representing the subject child. Such first and second hand evidence is invaluable and preferable to a report, the providence of which was unclear.'*

### **Relevant School records**

43. I completed a review of copy documentation the complainant provided, and those records the school provided in response to my investigation enquiries. I enclose relevant extracts at Appendix five to this report.

### **Analysis and Findings**

44. I note the complainant's concern the school failed to consider the psychologist's report as part of their investigation.
45. I note from the information provided the complainant sent the report to the school on 7 October 2022. In this email the complainant stated the report was forwarded as additional evidence. The complainant referred to specific page numbers as being relevant to the complaint that had been raised. The complainant advised the assessment had been conducted on 16 August 2022 and she had only received the report during the week of 7 October 2022.

46. I viewed the school's complaints policy which states, '*6. What to expect under this procedure, Your rights as a person making a complaint, in dealing with your complaint we will ensure fair treatment, clear reasons for decisions.*'
47. It is clear the investigation had already significantly exceeded the timeframe for concluding the complaint. The complainant felt the psychologist's report was important independent evidence to support their complaint. I therefore do not consider a further delay to allow the panel to fully consider the report and include their findings in the final decision was against the complainant's best interests. I accept there is a need to bring any complaints procedure to a conclusion in a timely manner. However, given that this had not been the case as the process had already taken more than four months, I do not consider it would have been excessive to prolong the process slightly longer.
48. Nonetheless, I would also highlight the inconsistent explanations offered by the school as to whether or not the BoG considered the psychologist's report. I note the BoG's response to the complainant dated 16th October 2022 made no reference to the psychologist's report. When the complainant queried this, she was advised that '*the Panel considered it disproportionate to re-open the matter and recall individuals, particularly where a significant amount of evidence had already been presented over a number of days and a report had already been prepared*'.
49. However, in response to enquiries from this Office, alongside stating that to consider the report would have delayed the investigation, conversely the School also stated the report was considered by the BoG but the unanimous decision was that it would not change their findings. It is unclear to me why this conflicting explanation was provided to my office. The school stated there is an email chain between committee members agreeing the approach. Unfortunately, the school has not provided this email chain, nor any record of the committee's deliberations in respect of the psychologist's report. This means I am unable to determine whether the report was considered, and if it was, how it was concluded the report would not alter the panel's findings.
50. I refer to the third Principle of Good Complaint Handling, Being Open and Accountable which states public bodies should provide honest, evidence based explanations and giving reasons for decisions. I also refer to the third Principle of Good Administration, Being Open and Accountable, which states public bodies

should be open and truthful when accounting for their decisions and actions. They should state their criteria for decision making and give reasons for their decisions.

51. From the evidence provided I consider the school failed to adhere to the above principles in the manner in which it handled the consideration of the psychologist's report and that this failure constitutes maladministration. I therefore uphold this element of complaint.
52. I consider the maladministration identified caused the complainant to experience the injustice of loss of opportunity to have the report considered during the investigation of the complaint and I recognise the frustration this caused her.

## **CONCLUSION**

53. The complainant raised concerns about how the school investigated her complaint. I upheld elements of the complaint for the reasons outlined in this report. I consider these failures constituted maladministration.
54. I recognise the impact the failures caused the complainant and the injustice sustained, as discussed in this report. I hope the findings and recommendations address their outstanding concerns.

## **Recommendations**

55. I recommend the school provides to the complainant a written apology in accordance with NIPSO's 'Guidance on issuing an apology' (July 2019), for the injustice caused as a result of the maladministration identified within **one month** of the date of this report.
56. I further recommend for service improvement and to prevent future recurrence that the school:
  - Discuss the findings of this report with all staff and governors involved in the complaint and ask them to reflect on the failings identified.
  - Provide evidence of its compliance of the above within **six months** from the date of this report.

**MARGARET KELLY**  
**Ombudsman**

**December 2024**



## **Appendix 1 - PRINCIPLES OF GOOD ADMINISTRATION**

### **Good administration by public service providers means:**

#### **1. Getting it right**

- Acting in accordance with the law and relevant guidance, with regard for the rights of those concerned.
- Acting in accordance with the public body's policy and guidance (published or internal).
- Taking proper account of established good practice.
- Providing effective services, using appropriately trained and competent staff.
- Taking reasonable decisions, based on all relevant considerations.

#### **2. Being customer focused**

- Ensuring people can access services easily.
- Informing customers what they can expect and what the public body expects of them.
- Keeping to its commitments, including any published service standards.
- Dealing with people helpfully, promptly and sensitively, bearing in mind their individual circumstances.
- Responding to customers' needs flexibly, including, where appropriate, co-ordinating a response with other service providers.

#### **3. Being open and accountable**

- Being open and clear about policies and procedures and ensuring that information, and any advice provided, is clear, accurate and complete.
- Stating its criteria for decision making and giving reasons for decisions
- Handling information properly and appropriately.
- Keeping proper and appropriate records.
- Taking responsibility for its actions.

#### **4. Acting fairly and proportionately**

- Treating people impartially, with respect and courtesy.
- Treating people without unlawful discrimination or prejudice, and ensuring no conflict of interests.
- Dealing with people and issues objectively and consistently.

- Ensuring that decisions and actions are proportionate, appropriate and fair.

## **5. Putting things right**

- Acknowledging mistakes and apologising where appropriate.
- Putting mistakes right quickly and effectively.
- Providing clear and timely information on how and when to appeal or complain.
- Operating an effective complaints procedure, which includes offering a fair and appropriate remedy when a complaint is upheld.

## **6. Seeking continuous improvement**

- Reviewing policies and procedures regularly to ensure they are effective.
- Asking for feedback and using it to improve services and performance.
- Ensuring that the public body learns lessons from complaints and uses these to improve services and performance.

## **Appendix 2 - PRINCIPLES OF GOOD COMPLAINT HANDLING**

### **Good complaint handling by public bodies means:**

#### **1. Getting it right**

- Acting in accordance with the law and relevant guidance, with regard for the rights of those concerned.
- Ensuring that those at the top of the public body provide leadership to support good complaint management and develop an organisational culture that values complaints.
- Having clear governance arrangements, which set out roles and responsibilities, and ensure lessons are learned from complaints.
- Including complaint management as an integral part of service design.
- Ensuring staff are equipped and empowered to act decisively to resolve complaints.
- Focusing the outcomes for the complainant and the public body.
- Signposting to the next stage of the complaints procedure in the right way and at the right time.

#### **2. Being customer focused**

- Having clear and simple procedures.
- Ensuring that complainants can easily access the service dealing with complaints, and informing them about advice and advocacy services where appropriate.
- Dealing with complainants promptly and sensitively, bearing in mind their individual circumstances.
- Listening to complainants to understand the complaint and the outcome they are seeking.
- Responding flexibly, including where appropriate co-ordinating responses with any other bodies involved in the same complaint, where appropriate.

#### **3. Being open and accountable**

- Publishing clear, accurate and complete information about how to complain, and how and when to take complaints further.
- Publishing service standards for handling complaints.

- Providing honest evidence-based explanations and giving reasons for decisions.
- Keeping full and accurate records.

#### **4. Acting fairly and proportionately**

- Treating the complainant impartially, and without unlawful discrimination or prejudice.
- Ensuring that complaints are investigated thoroughly and fairly to establish the facts of the case.
- Ensuring that decisions and actions are proportionate, appropriate and fair.
- Ensuring that complaints are reviewed by someone not involved in the events leading to the complaint.
- Acting fairly towards staff complained about as well as towards complainants.

#### **5. Putting things right**

- Acknowledging mistakes and apologising where appropriate.
- Providing prompt, appropriate and proportionate remedies.
- Considering all the relevant factors of the case when offering remedies.
- Taking account of any injustice or hardship that results from pursuing the complaint as well as from the original dispute.

#### **6. Seeking continuous improvement**

- Using all feedback and the lessons learnt from complaints to improve service design and delivery.
- Having systems in place to record, analyse and report on learning from complaints.
- Regularly reviewing the lessons to be learnt from complaints.
- Where appropriate, telling the complainant about the lessons learnt and the changes made to services, guidance or policy.

