

# Parental Complaints Procedures

## Introduction

This policy was drawn up in accordance with procedures agreed by the INTO and the management bodies of Primary schools, the CPSMA, the Church of Ireland, An Foras Pátrunachta, the Muslim Primary Education Board, Educate Together and the National Boards of Management in Special Education in 2023 for dealing with complaints by parents. It has been implemented by staff from January 2024 and will be revised in 2027.

## Rationale

A procedure for processing complaints by parents is prescribed for all schools under Section 28 of the Education Act (1998).

## Relationship to school ethos

The school promotes positive home-school contacts and endeavors to enhance the self esteem of everyone within the school community. This policy contributes towards those ideals.

## Aims and objectives

1. To facilitate the resolution of difficulties where they may arise, in an agree and fair manner
2. To foster fruitful and trusting relationships between school and parents.
3. To afford parents an opportunity to express opinions / grievances through the framework of a defined procedure
4. To minimize the opportunity for conflict

## In school procedures

Only those complaints, which are written and signed by parents/guardians of pupils may be investigated formally by the Board of Management except where those complaints are deemed by the Board to be:

- (i) on matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education;
- (ii) frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
- (iii) complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedure.

Unwritten complaints not in the above categories may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

## Stage 1 (Discussion)

- 1.1 **Parent/ guardian meets teacher:** Parent / guardian who wishes to make a complaint should make an appointment to meet with the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings with the teacher can be convened as appropriate.
- 1.2 **Parent/ guardian meets Principal:** Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher he/she should approach the Principal with a view to resolving it. Again, an appointment can be arranged through the school office, briefly stating the nature of the complaint. Further meetings with the Principal can be convened as appropriate.
- 1.3 **Parent/ guardian meets Chairperson:** Where the complaint remains unresolved the parent/guardian should seek an appointment with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings can be convened by the Chairperson as appropriate.

The complaint may be resolved at this stage.

## Stage 2 (Written- 10 days)

- 2.1 **Written complaint sent to the Chairperson:** If the complaint has not been resolved at stage 1, the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further should submit the complaint in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Management. This commences stage 2.
- 2.2 **Chairperson provides a copy to the teacher:** The Chairperson should provide a copy of the written complaint to the teacher against whom the complaint has been made, without delay.
- 2.3 **Chairperson convenes meeting(s):** The Chairperson should seek to resolve the complaint between the teacher and the parent/ legal guardian within 10 school days of the commencement of stage 2.1. This may require one or more meetings to be convened by the Chairperson with the teacher/ parent/ legal guardian and other parties as deemed appropriate by the Chairperson.

The complaint may be resolved at this stage.

## Stage 3 (Board of Management- 20 days)

- 3.1 **Chairperson makes a formal report to the Board:** If the complaint is not resolved following stage 2 and the parent/ legal guardian wishes to pursue the matter, they should inform the Chairperson in writing of this fact. The Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board of Management within 10 days of receipt of this statement. At this meeting, the Board can decide to proceed to 3.2 or 3.3.
- 3.2 **Complaint concluded:** Where the Board considers the complaint, the process may be concluded at this stage, if the board considers that:

- The complaint is frivolous/ vexatious;
- The complaint has already been investigated by the board;
- The complaint is more appropriately dealt with through a more relevant DE circular, or;
- Where resources in law has been initiated.

Where the Board determines the complaints concluded at this stage, the parent/ legal guardian should be informed within five days of the board meeting.

**3.3 Proceed to a hearing:** Where the Board decides to proceed to a hearing, it should proceed as follows:

- The teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to a full hearing and the Chairperson must ensure the teacher has been supplied with all documents which are being considered by the Board.
- The Board should arrange a meeting with the parent/ legal guardian if it considers such to be required. The parent/ legal guardian is entitled to be represented by a friend or a representative, who may be accompanied for the purpose of assistance and note taking.
- The teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the board as the employer in response to the complaint. This written statement will be confidential to the employer and will not be shared with any third party.
- The meeting of the Board of Management referred to in 3 (b), (c) and (d) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3.1. in so far as possible.

## **Stage 4 (Decision- 5 days)**

**4.1 Written Decision from Chairperson:** The Board will consider the complaint and the response provided and will adjudicate on the matter. The Chairperson should convey the decision of the board in writing to the teacher and parent/ legal guardian(s) within five days of the meeting held at stage 3.3.

**4.2 Complaint concluded:** The decision of the Board shall be final.

## **Success Criteria**

1. Swift and efficient resolution of grievances
2. Parent / teacher satisfaction
3. Positive school community feedback
4. Review of school policies as issues arise

## Review

The revised policy was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2024 and will be reviewed in 2027.

Signed: Mary Dahlen

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 08-01-24

Signed: John Eide

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 08-01-24