



Complaints Procedure

Rationale

The Board of Management of *Scoil Bhríde, Kill* has adopted the Complaints Procedure, agreed by the teachers' union and management bodies, which provides a mechanism for dealing with parental complaints against a teacher as set out in Section 28 of the Education Act 1998. Other complaints are also dealt with in this policy document.

Relationship to School Ethos

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

Aims/Objectives

To foster fruitful and trusting relationships between school and parents.
To afford persons an opportunity to express opinions/grievances through the framework of a defined procedure
To minimize the opportunity for conflict by providing parents an opportunity to liaise with the class teacher.

Introduction

As a school community, we are committed to upholding the Catholic ethos of our school under our patron the Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin, our school mission statement and our vision for the school in all our dealings with pupils, parents, one another and with the wider community in which our pupils live.

For that reason, we will try to prevent or minimise the need for complaints where this is possible. However, given that our community is made up of human beings and that mistakes can be made, we will approach these issues in a spirit of mutual respect and tolerance for the benefit of all.

This policy seeks to outline our approach to dealing with the following:

Telephone complaints
Complaints about the principal
Complaints about teachers
Complaints about Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)
Complaints about pupils
Complaints about parents
Complaints about ancillary staff.

People have a right to know who is making a complaint against them.

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

Only those complaints which are written and signed may be investigated formally by the Board of Management (Appendix 1), except where those complaints are of a Child Protection Nature or deemed by the Board to be:

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

Complaints about teachers - Made by parents

The Complaints Procedure outlined in the 'Management Board Members' Handbook' which has been agreed between the INTO and the CPSMA will be followed in relation to complaints about teachers made by parents. It is important to note the following:

- **It is expected that under normal circumstances, a parent who has a complaint about a teacher would approach the teacher at a mutually suitable time with a view to resolving the difficulty. This appointment should be made through the office, through the homework journal or a note to the teacher. Please remember that courtesy, calmness and respect is expected at all times. (please also see Code of Good Behaviour pgs. 8 & 9 – Parents' responsibilities)**
- If the class teacher is by-passed by the parent, in favour of discussing the complaint with the principal, it will be suggested that the teacher should be approached first. However, if the principal feels that this would be unwise, due to the demeanour of the parent in question, the complaint will be listened to without prejudice, notes taken and the parent will be asked to return when the teacher has been given an opportunity to present his/her views on the issues to the principal
- The principal / Teacher, having listened to both sides, will try to bring the issue to a satisfactory conclusion
- Parents will be expected to make an appointment to see the class teacher if the matter needs more than a few minutes to resolve, in view of the fact that classes must have adequate supervision at all times and that corridors are unsuitable venues for discussion purposes
- Teachers are not expected to have to deal with an angry, aggressive, threatening, intimidating or otherwise abusive parent. The support of the principal, or if unavailable, deputy principal or colleague should be sought in these circumstances
- In the interest of teachers' personal safety, parents presenting with a complaint under the influence of drugs or alcohol, should not be engaged with unless the teacher is supported by the principal, deputy principal or colleague
- Teachers should retain a written record of any altercation which arises with a parent or guardian during which the teacher is threatened, shouted at or otherwise abused. A copy of this record should be given to the principal also
- If a complaint cannot be resolved with the class teacher, parents may bring the matter to the principal.

Telephone complaints

If answered by personnel other than the principal, these will be dealt with by asking for the name of the complainant, his/her relationship to the school and what the call is in connection with, before passing these details on to the principal. No further details will be sought, nor will the complainant be engaged with over the phone, except by the principal teacher. The principal will decide on a case by case basis, whether to talk to the complainant immediately or to investigate the matter first.

Complaints about the principal - Made by parents or pupils

Complaints coming from parents or pupils will be dealt with directly by the principal in the first instance, in order to resolve the issue informally and amicably if possible. If the complainant is unhappy or feels that the complaint has been dealt with unfairly, the complaint may be outlined in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

Complaints about teachers from pupils

If a complaint about a teacher comes from a pupil to another teacher, the teacher to whom the complaint is made will refer to the pupil's teacher. This teacher will then decide whether to deal with the matter her/himself or to refer it to the principal. In either case, a written record should be kept. If the complaint about a teacher comes from a pupil to the principal, it will be listened to, notes taken and the pupil will be advised that the matter will be discussed with the teacher concerned with a view to resolving the issue. In either case, if the complaint is deemed by the principal, after investigation and discussion with both the pupil and teacher, to be wrong or vindictive on the part of the pupil, the parents or guardian of the pupil may be invited to the school to discuss the matter.

Complaints about Special Needs Assistants (SNAs):

Complaints coming from parents will be dealt with directly by the class teacher who will try to resolve the difficulty amicably.

Complaints about the SNA coming from the class teacher will be dealt with in the first instance by the teacher approaching the SNA with a view to resolving the issue. If the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily, it will be brought to the principal.

Complaints about pupils

Complaints made about pupils by other parents will be handled by the class teacher in the first instance and the principal if thought necessary, through the procedures set out in the Code of Good Behaviour and the Anti-Bullying Policy. Under no circumstances will a parent be allowed access to a child other than their own child in the school

Complaints made about pupils by other pupils will be handled by the teacher to whom the complaint is made in the first instance and by referring the matter to the principal if considered necessary.

Complaints about Parents

Teachers will follow the Complaints Procedure (Appendix 1) by referring the complaint to the Principal in the first instance. If the teacher is unhappy about the Principal's response or recommendation, Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure may be invoked.

Complaints about Ancillary Staff

These will be referred to the principal who will approach the staff member directly in order to resolve the issue.

Complaints about substitute teachers and peripatetic teachers

These will be referred to the principal who will approach the teacher in question directly with a view to investigating and resolving the issue.

Complaints about visitors to the school

In the case of visitors to the school, (e.g. students on work experience, students on teaching practice, visiting members of other agencies) the complainant will refer the issue to the principal in the first instance. If not resolved at this stage, the issue will be referred to the management body dealing with the worker with a view to resolving the issue.

Complaints about a Department of Education and Skills Inspector:

In the case of complaints against a school inspector, the guidelines established by the INTO in the publication: 'Procedures for Review of Inspections' and the Department of Education and Science 'Comments and Complaints' guidelines will be followed.

As stated in the guidelines, any complaint will be issued and conveyed to the Inspectorate preferably on the day in question or by the end of the following day but no later than 5 days.

Roles and Responsibilities

All stakeholders involved in the education of pupils will take responsibility for implementing the policy.

Review

The Policy will be evaluated on an ongoing basis by representatives from the whole school community and will be reviewed every three years or if and when the Board deems appropriate.

Success Criteria

Swift and efficient resolution of grievances.
Parent/Teacher satisfaction.
Positive school community feedback.
Reviews of school policies as issues arise.

Implementation

This policy has been Ratified by the Board of Management April 29th 2015.

Jean Roche,

Chairperson Board of Management

Appendix 1: Stages

The "Complainant" is the person making the complaint.

The "Complainee" is the person about whom the complaint is made.

1. Stage 1

- a. A person who wishes to make a complaint should approach the complainee with a view to resolving the complaint.
- b. Where the complainant is unable to resolve the complaint with the complainee she/he should approach the Principal Teacher with a view to resolving it.

2. Stage 2

- a. If the complaint is still unresolved and the complainant wishes to pursue the matter further she/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management. This is best done through the school office or principal's office.
- b. The Chairperson should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the complainee and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 5 (school) days of receipt of the written complaint.

3. Stage 3

- a. If the complaint is not resolved by this stage, the Chairperson should, subject to the general authorisation of the Board and except in those cases where the Chairperson deems the particular authorisation of the Board to be required:
 - i. Supply the complainee with a copy of the written complaint; and
 - ii. Arrange a meeting with the complainant and, where applicable, the Principal teacher with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint.

4. Stage 4

- a. If the complaint is still not resolved the Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board within 10 days of the meeting referred to in Stage 3.a ii
- b. If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the complainee and the complainant should be so informed within 3 days of the Board meeting.
- c. If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation it proceeds as follows:
- d. The complainee should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage;

- e. The complainee should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint;
- f. The complainee should be requested to supply a written statement to the Board in response to the complaint;
- g. The complainee should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of the case to the Board. The complainee would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting;
- h. The meeting of the Board of Management referred to in (d) and (e) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3.a ii.

Stage 5

5.1 When the Board has completed its investigation, the Chairperson should convey the decision of the Board in writing to the complainee and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the Board.

5.2 The decision of the Board shall be final.

In this policy 'days' means school days.