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Complaints Procedure Policy

Introduction:

It is in the interest of pupils, parents and teachers that good relations exist between home and school. Teachers are willing to discuss any problems which may occur from time to time. With mutual respect and goodwill, most problems can be resolved readily.

This policy aims to clarify the procedure used to deal with general complaints by or against school staff (Principal/Teachers/SNAs/Ancillary Staff) or internal staff grievance issues.

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

- Telephone Complaints
- Complaints about teachers
- Complaints about Special Needs Assistants
- Complaints about parents
- Complaints about ancillary staff
- Complaints about visiting personnel in the school

Rationale:

We accept that grievances and complaints are a natural and normal part of the school workplace and we wish to promptly, fairly and effectively deal with issues as they arise.

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 on these details 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 teachers:

We aim to protect our employees from unsubstantiated, malicious and untrue allegations.

The INTO and Primary School Management reached an agreement in 1993 on a procedure for dealing with complaints by parents/guardians. The purpose of this procedure is to facilitate the resolution of difficulties where they may arise in an agreed and fair manner. The agreement lays out in five stages, the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed at each stage.

Procedure:

Stage 1:

1. A parent/guardian who wished to make a complaint should, unless there are local arrangements to the contrary, approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint.
2. 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.
3. If the complaint is still unresolved, the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving it.

Stage 2:

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further, he/she should lodge a complaint in writing with the chairperson of the BOM.
2. The chairperson should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3:

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the chairperson should, subject to the general authorisation of the BOM and except in those cases where the chairperson deems the particular authorisation of the board to be required:
 - (a) Supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint; and
 - (b) Arrange a meeting with the teacher 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.

Stage 4:

1. If the complaint is still not resolved, the chairperson should make a formal report to the board within ten days of the meeting referred to in 3(b).
2. If the board considers that the complaint is not substantiated, the teacher and the complainant should be so informed within 3 days of the board meeting.
3. If the board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation, it proceeds as follows;
 - a) The teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage.
 - b) The teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint.

- c) The teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the BOM in response to the complaint.
- d) The BOM may arrange a meeting with the complainant if it considers such to be required. The complainant would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting; and
- e) The meeting of the BOM referred to in (d) and (e) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3(b).

Stage 5:

- 1. When the board has completed its investigation, the chairperson should convey the decision of the BOM in writing to the teacher and the complainant within 5 days of the meeting of the BOM.
- 2. The decision of the board shall be final.
- 3. The complaints procedure shall be reviewed after three years.
- 4. Primary School Management or INTO may withdraw from this agreement having given the other party three months' notice of intention to do so.

In this agreement "days" means school days.

Note:

The vast majority of complaints are resolved locally and informally. However, in certain circumstances, for example, where the complaint is considered to be serious in nature, or where the teacher is required to submit a written response to the board, the teacher should contact his/her INTO District Representative or INTO Head Office for advice and assistance. In advising a teacher, the INTO will be anxious to ensure that there is due process and fair procedures applied, which generally include;

- That the teacher is fully apprised of all matters being considered by the board of management, including being provided with copies of all relevant documentation;
- The right to respond and adequate time to prepare a response;
- Entitlement to be represented by the INTO, if necessary.

Where a teacher contacts the INTO in relation to a complaint(s) made against him/her, the officials involved will generally meet with the teacher and require him/her to provide detailed written information and documentation on the matter. The officials will assess the case and decide if additional specific legal advice or a legal consultation is required. Specific legal advice is obtained for members in accordance with the Rules of the INTO and the conditions prescribed by the CEC.

Complaints about Special Needs Assistants:

- 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 Parents:

- Teacher will follow the complaints procedure 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 directly who will approach the staff member directly in order to resolve the issue.

Complaints about substitute 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 (eg: 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 Skills "Comments and Complaints" guidelines will be followed.

As stated in the guidelines, any complaint will be issued and conveyed to the inspectorate on the day in question or by the end of the following day.

Appendix:

- It is important to note that the Parent's Association is not a forum for complaints.
- The parent's nominee on the Board of Management cannot act as a medium for complaints on behalf of individual parents, groups of parents or the Parent's Association.
- The stages of the grievance's procedure should be made clear to any parent/guardian by the members of the Board or Parent's Association in the event of being approached with a grievance.
- Members of the BOM are bound by confidentiality on all issues taking place at board meetings including complaints. Only information that is deemed for open discussion

by the chairperson of the BOM shall be communicated with the wider school community.

- This policy will be available on the school website. A hard copy will be available by request from the principal.

The Complaints Procedure will be brought to the attention of the School staff, the Parent's Association and the Board of Management.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____.

It will take effect immediately from time of ratification.

The policy will be reviewed in June 2021.

Signed:

Chairperson

Date