

# **Parental Complaints Policy**

## **Introduction**

The following redrafted policy was completed in November 2014. The INTO and CPSMA reached agreement in 1993 on a procedure for dealing with complaints by parents against teachers. 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.

## **Rationale**

### **The need for this policy arises from:-**

To be in compliance with Section 28, Education Act 1998 – procedures for processing complaints by parents prescribed for all schools under the Act.

To provide parents and teachers with a clear process when making a complaint and dealing with the process involved.

## **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 afford parents an opportunity to express opinions/grievances through the framework of a defined procedure.

To minimise the opportunity for conflict.

Through affording parents an opportunity to liaise with the class teacher.

## **Exclusions**

### **The following complaints are excluded from this policy.**

When complaints are deemed by the Principal//Board of Management to be on matters of professional competence which cannot be dealt with at school level and which may be referred to the Department of Education and Science for investigation. The Complainant to be informed of any such decision; This comes under section 24 of the 1998 Education Act which became legislation in 2007.

Where complaints are deemed by the Principal/ Board of Management to be frivolous, vexatious or anonymous complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a Teacher in a school.

Complaints in which either party has had recourse to law or to another standard procedure, may be excluded from the scope of this procedure.

Child protection reports.

## **In-School Procedures**

### **Stage 1**

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should approach the class teacher, by prior appointment with a view to resolving the complaint. Teachers are not to be contacted at home or outside school hours. This meeting should take place during school hours.

2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher s/he should approach the principal, by prior appointment, with a view to resolving it. The Principal will not be in a position to discuss the complaint with the parent unless the parent has already met the teacher regarding the complaint. If deemed necessary, the Principal may meet both parent and teacher together.

3. If the complaint is still unresolved the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the chairperson of the Board of Management and meet him/her with a view to resolving it. The Chairperson will inform the Principal that that a complaint has been made to him.

### **Stage 2**

1. If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further s/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the chairperson of the Board of Management. The Board of Management is not involved at stage 2.

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 five days of receipt of the written complaint.

It is envisaged that the overwhelming majority of complaints will be resolved at either stages 1 and 2.

### **Stage 3**

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, 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:

supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint;

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 10 days of the meeting referred to in stage 3.
2. If the board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the teacher and the complainant should be so informed in writing within three 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:
  - the teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage;
  - the teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint;
  - the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the board in response to the complaint;
  - the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of case to the board.
  - the board may arrange a meeting with the complainant if it considers such to be required.
  - Both parties to the complaint would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend/colleague (non-legal) or Trade Union representative at any such meeting.
  - the meeting of the board of management referred to above will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in stage 3.

#### **Stage 5**

1. When the board has completed its investigation, the chairperson should convey the decision of the board in writing to the teacher and the complainant within five days of the meeting of the board.
2. The decision of the board shall be final.

#### **In addition;**

1. The Complaints Procedure shall be reviewed after three years.
2. CPSMA 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.

#### **Success Criteria**

Swift and efficient resolution of grievances.

Parent/Teacher satisfaction.

Positive school community feedback.

Reviews of school policies as issues arise.

#### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed after a 3 year cycle.

**Ratification:**

This policy was ratified at a Board of Management meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

Signature of Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Implementation**

This policy will be fully implemented from 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015.