

School Complaints Policy

Respect and inclusion lie in the heart of our school ethos. Therefore, all members of our school community-our children, parents, staff and visitors- are encouraged to act towards each other in a way that makes everyone feel welcome and safe in our school.

Please note that throughout this policy, the term 'parent' or 'parents' also includes legal guardians.

We hope that any and all complaints or grievances, should any occur, are addressed and resolved as quickly as possible to everyone's satisfaction.

However, to further underpin our school's atmosphere of respect, this policy has been drafted to ensure all members of our school community know and understand the procedures regarding how complaints or grievances that may occur will be dealt with.

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

Telephone complaints

- If answered by a member of staff 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 connected with.
- These details will then be passed on to the principal and the complainant will be contacted by the principal as soon as is possible
- 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 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-made by the parents

The complaints procedure agreed between the INTO and the CPSMA will be followed in relation to complaints about teachers made by parents. This five step procedure is detailed in full in Appendix 1 of this policy. 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 suitable time with a view to resolving the issue
If the parent approaches the principal first, it will be suggested that the teacher should be approached first. However, if the principal feels that this would be unwise, the complaint will be listened to without prejudice, notes taken and the parent may be asked to return when the teacher has been given an opportunity to present his/her views on the issue/issues to the principal
- The principal, having listened to both sides, will try to bring the issue to a satisfactory conclusion
- Parents must make an appointment to see the class teacher if the matter needs more than a few minutes to resolve
- Teachers are not expected to deal with any angry, aggressive, threatening, intimidating or abusive behaviour. The support of the principal should be sought in these circumstances
- In the interest of personal safety, should the parent presenting a complaint deemed to be under the influence of a substance, the teacher should seek the support of the principal, deputy principal or a colleague
- Teachers should keep a written record of any situation that arises with a parent during which the teacher is threatened, shouted at or otherwise abused. A copy of this record should be given to the principal.
- If a complaint can't be resolved with the class teacher, parents may bring the matter to the principal.

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, the principal should be informed of the circumstances and a written record kept by both the teacher concerned and the principal.
- 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, need to be discussed further the pupil's parents will be invited to the school to discuss the matter.

Complaints about Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

- Complaints coming from parents to the class teacher will be dealt with directly by the class teacher who will try to resolve the issue amicably
- Similarly, complaints coming from parents to the principal will be dealt with directly by the class teacher who will try to resolve the issue 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, 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 Behaviour and the Anti-Bullying Policy. Under no circumstances should a parent approach any 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 deemed 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 visiting 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 member 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.

Internal Conflict Issues

In keeping with the mission and ethos of the school, staff members will seek to resolve internal conflict issues amicably between those concerned. However, if this process fails:

- The INTO staff representative will act as liaison between staff members or between staff and management in these instances
- Everyone involved will be listened to and respected
- An early intervention in relation to conflict issues will be facilitated as far as possible
- All parties will work towards a resolution of the conflict and move on
- If necessary, an independent facilitator may be engaged to help resolve the conflict
- If the issue is not resolved, grievance procedures may be followed

Complaints about a Department of Education Skills Inspector:

In the case of complaints about 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 on the day in question or by the end of the following day.