



How to address an issue

Information for parents



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Introduction

We understand that from time to time issues may arise in schools. Information is provided in this document relating to how to go about addressing that issue. There are two main parts in question; internal procedures and external procedures.

We recommend parents follow these procedures only. These procedures have been agreed to and are recognised by the main education partners in Ireland including An Foras Pátrúnachta. All schools under our patronage will follow these procedures. We hope that the information in this booklet will be of assistance to you and that the issue in question will be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties. If the issue relates to a school under another patron body, the matter should be addressed with that body.

Please note that the scope of anonymous complaints is limited.

The Irish language version of this booklet is available on the Irish version of the same webpage.

Internal Procedures

It is important that an issue is addressed at the right level. For example, a classroom issue should first be raised with the relevant teacher instead of addressing it with the Board of Management as a first step.

- a) If you're worried about your child at school or you have a complaint about the school, your child's class teacher is the best person to approach first for an informal discussion. To do this, contact the school office and organise an appointment or phone call for an informal discussion. If you are not happy with their response, you can talk to the principal of the school (depending on your complaint, a school's own procedures may ask you to speak to another member of staff before speaking with the principal).
- b) If your complaint is about a staff member (who is not the principal), you should contact the school principal. Contact the school office to make an appointment with the principal. If you are not happy with the response of the principal you can address the issue with the Board of Management.
- c) Complaints regarding the principal should be directed to the Board of Management by sending a letter addressed to 'An Cathaoirleach' at the school address. Please note that correspondence will come to you after the next Board of Management meeting and this may be a number of weeks.

If the issue has not been resolved having followed the above steps, you can look to resolve the issue by using the External Procedures.

External Procedures

An Foras Pátrúnachta

An Foras Pátrúnachta may be able to investigate the issue on condition that the Internal Procedures have been followed or if the issue relates to the Board of Management itself. To do this, send a letter to: An Foras Pátrúnachta, Block K3, Maynooth Business Campus, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

The Teaching Council

The Teaching Council provides a formal process for issues relating to registered teachers to be investigated. The below document 'How to make a complaint about a registered teacher' gives detail on this process and is available at: <http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Fitness-to-Teach/Making-a-Complaint.pdf>. Further information on this and on how to proceed with a complaint is available on The Teaching Council website at: <http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Fitness-to-Teach/Complaints-about-Registered-Teachers/>

Office of the Ombudsman for Children

The [Office of the Ombudsman for Children](http://www.oco.ie/) provides an independent and impartial complaint handling service. The Ombudsman for Children can investigate complaints relating to the administrative actions of a school recognised by the Department of Education and Skills provided the complainant has firstly and fully followed the school's complaints procedures. The key criterion for any intervention by the Ombudsman for Children is that the action complained of has or may have adversely affected the child. More information about the Ombudsman for Children can be obtained on www.oco.ie/ or by calling them on 1800 20 20 40.

Parental Complaints Procedure

This Complaints Procedure, agreed by the teachers' union and management bodies, provides a mechanism for dealing with parental complaints against a teacher as set out in Section 28 of the Education Act 1998.

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 parents 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

Only those complaints about teachers 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:

- matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education
- 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.

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

Stage 1

- 1.1 A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint.
- 1.2 Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher she/he should approach the Principal Teacher with a view to resolving it.
- 1.3 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

- 2.1 If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further she/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- 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 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3

- 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:
 - 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

- 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 3.1 (b)
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 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 Board in response to the complaint;
 - d. The teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of the case to the Board. The teacher would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting;
 - e. the Board 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
 - f. 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 3.1 (b)

Stage 5

- 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 5 days of the meeting of the Board.
- 5.2 The decision of the Board shall be final.

In this document '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.



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