



Holy Family Senior National School

River Valley, Swords, Co. Dublin.

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Complaints Procedure (Parental) Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy provides information and guidelines to parents and staff on the Complaints Procedure (Parental) in Holy Family S.N.S. These procedures have been agreed by the teachers' union and the different school management bodies.

If a complaint arises against a member of school staff, this policy provides guidelines to all the parties involved as to how they should proceed and the timeline for investigating and resolving the complaint.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Parent/Staff Communication Policy which outlines structures in place to facilitate open communication within our school community.

Aims

1. To promote open, respectful and constructive communication between parents/guardians and the school.
2. To outline clear procedures to parents/guardians about how to address a concern or complaint they may have about a member of staff.
3. To investigate and resolve complaints in a consistent, open and structured manner.
4. To afford due process to all those involved in the complaints process.

Introduction

- Where a complaint raised by a parent/legal guardian is deemed by the employer/board of management to relate to the following, this procedure will not apply;
 - matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education;
 - frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or

- complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedure.

- In all circumstances, any form of written correspondence for the attention of the Board of Management must be supplied to the Chairperson of the Board of Management only. Any deviation from this could be deemed prejudicial and as acting outside the scope of this agreement.
- Days in this procedure refer specifically to school days. A school day is a day on which the school is in operation. Holiday periods, school closures and leaves of absences are not counted as school days for the purpose of this procedure.
- Group/collective complaints are not provided for and each parent/legal guardian raising a concern will be dealt with separately through this process.
- The procedure is a domestic forum and accordingly, neither management nor the INTO intends that there would be legal representation at any stage.
- Issues should be raised in a timely manner. It is in the best interests of the child that issues are raised to achieve early resolution at the earliest possible stage with the teacher, ideally while the pupil is in that teacher's class.

Stage 1

1.1 Parent/guardian meets teacher

A parent/legal guardian who wishes to make a complaint in respect of their own child, should, seek an appointment with the teacher concerned with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings with the teacher can be convened as appropriate.

1.2 Parent/guardian meets Principal

Where the parent/legal guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the teacher, they should seek an appointment with the Principal with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings can be convened by the Principal as appropriate

1.3 Parent/guardian meets Chairperson

Where the complaint remains unresolved, the parent/legal guardian should seek an appointment with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving the complaint. Further meetings can be convened by the Chairperson as appropriate.

Complaint resolved

The complaint may be resolved during this stage.

Stage 2

2.1 Written complaint sent to Chairperson

If the complaint has not been resolved at stage 1, the parent/ legal guardian who wishes to pursue the matter further should submit the complaint in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

This commences stage 2.

2.2 Chairperson provides a copy to the teacher

The Chairperson should provide a copy of the written complaint to the teacher against whom the complaint has been made, without delay.

2.3 Chairperson convenes meeting(s)

The Chairperson should seek to resolve the complaint between the teacher and the parent/ legal guardian within 10 school days of the commencement of stage 2.1. This may require one or more meetings to be convened by the Chairperson with the teacher/parent/legal guardian and other parties as deemed appropriate by the Chairperson.

Complaint resolved

The complaint may be resolved at this stage.

Stage 3

3.1 Chairperson makes a formal report to the Board

If the complaint remains unresolved following stage 2 and the parent/ legal guardian wishes to pursue the matter, they should inform the Chairperson in writing of this fact. The Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board of Management within 10 days of receipt of this written statement. At this meeting, the Board can decide to proceed to either stage 3.2 or 3.3.

3.2 Complaint concluded

Where the Board considers the complaint, the process may be concluded at this stage, if the board considers that:

- a) The complaint is frivolous/vexatious;
- b) The complaint has already been investigated by the board;
- c) The complaint is more appropriately dealt with through a more relevant DE

circular, or;

d) where recourse to law has been initiated.

Where the Board determines the complaint is concluded at this stage, the parent/legal guardian should be informed within five days of the Board meeting.

3.3 Proceed to a hearing

Where the Board decides to proceed to a hearing, it should proceed as follows:

a) the teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to a full hearing and the Chairperson must ensure the teacher has been supplied with all documents which are being considered by the Board.

b) the Board should arrange a meeting with the parent/legal guardian if it considers such to be required. The parent/ legal guardian is entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting.

c) the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of their case to the Board. The teacher is entitled to be represented by a friend or a union representative, who may be accompanied for the purpose of assistance and note taking.

d) the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the board as the employer in response to the complaint. This written statement will be confidential to the employer and will not be shared with any third party.

e) the meeting of the Board of Management referred to in 3(b), (c) and (d) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3.1. in so far as possible.

Stage 4

4.1 Written decision from Chairperson

The Board will consider the complaint and the response provided and will adjudicate on the matter. The Chairperson should convey the decision of the Board in writing to the teacher and the parent/legal guardian(s) within five days of the meeting held at stage 3.3.

4.2 Complaint concluded

The decision of the Board shall be final.

Behaviour of all Stakeholders in the School

Positive and respectful communication is an expectation of our school. This not only extends to the children but to all of the stakeholders e.g. the staff, parents and the wider community. It is important that all stakeholders are responsible for their own behaviour in the school. Examples include:

- All stakeholders are expected to speak to each other with respect. Shouting or other aggressive tones are not acceptable. If a stakeholder displays anger or aggression to another member of the school community, they may be asked to remove themselves from the building.
- All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises
- Staff should not be asked to speak about another parent's child. The staff of the school will respect each child's right to privacy so it is asked that parents respect other children's rights to privacy.
- When stakeholders meet, it is important to respect that meetings should be kept to a reasonable amount of time. Times of meetings should be agreed beforehand and these should be respected.

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act became operative in 2005. It is an important piece of legislation for Board of Managements and for those who work in schools, as schools and colleges were brought under the scope of safety legislation for the first time. It is recognized that school staff may be at risk from violence in the form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults or other forms of intimidation. This behaviour may come from pupils, parents, guardians, other staff members or intruders. In this respect, all staff should be aware of **DES Circular 40/97** which deals with the procedures to follow if they feel they have been subjected to any of the above behaviour.

Success Criteria

- Swift and efficient resolution of complaints
- Parent/Teacher satisfaction
- Positive school community feedback
- Review of school policies as issues arise.

This Complaints Procedure (Parental) Policy will be reviewed and updated in two years' time.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 11th March 2024. It will be reviewed in two years' time.

Signed _____ Date _____

Mary Kildea- Chairperson

Signed _____ Date _____

Geraldine Gowen-Principal