

BLESSINGTON EDUCATE
TOGETHER NATIONAL
SCHOOL

PARENTAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Ratified by Board of Management on:	
Signed:	
Date:	
Chairperson, Board of Management	

CONTENTS

1.0	INTO / PRIMARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE	3
2.0	INTRODUCTION	3
3.0	RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES	3
3.1	RIGHTS OF A PERSON MAKING A COMPLAINT	3
3.2	RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PERSON MAKING A COMPLAINT	4
3.3	RIGHTS OF PARTIES INVOLVED DURING THE INVESTIGATION	4
3.3.1	COMPLAINANT	4
3.3.2	STAFF	4
3.3.3	LEGAL REPRESENTATION	4
3.4	WHERE A COMPLAINANT IS A MEMBER OF THE BOM	4
4.0	WHO WILL DEAL WITH YOUR COMPLAINT?	5
5.0	COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE	5
5.1	INFORMAL STAGE: STAGE 1	5
5.2	INFORMAL STAGE: STAGE 2	5
5.3	FORMAL STAGE: STAGE 3	5
5.4	FORMAL STAGE: STAGE 4	6
5.5	FORMAL STAGE: STAGE 5	6
6.0	RECORD KEEPING	7
7.0	MALICIOUS OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS	7

1.0 INTO / PRIMARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

The Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) and Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA) reached agreement in 1993 on a procedure for dealing with complaints by parents against teachers. The purpose of the 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. Please note this is a non-statutory procedure.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Many complaints can be dealt with in an informal manner by firstly contacting the classroom teacher and/or contacting the Principal in the first instance.

Only those complaints about teachers which are written and signed by parents / guardians of pupils may be investigated formally by the Board of Management (BOM), except where those complaints are deemed by the Board to be:

- On 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.

Unwritten complaints not in the above categories may be processed informally as set out in Section 5.1 (Informal Stage: Stage 1) of this procedure.

Note: In this process the term days refers to school days not calendar days.

3.0 RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 RIGHTS OF A PERSON MAKING A COMPLAINT

In dealing with your complaint, BETNS will ensure that you receive:

- Fair treatment;
- Courtesy;
- A timely response;
- Accurate advice;
- Respect for your privacy. Complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility that we may have to consult with other appropriate parties regarding your complaint; and
- Reasons for our decisions.

Where the complaint is justified we will acknowledge this and address

the complaint you have raised. If, after investigation, it is judged there are no grounds for your complaint, you will be advised accordingly.

3.2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PERSON MAKING A COMPLAINT

In making your complaint we would expect that you:

- Raise issues in a timely manner;
- Treat staff with respect and courtesy;
- Provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues you raise; and
- Use these procedures fully and engage in them at the appropriate levels.

3.3 RIGHTS OF PARTIES INVOLVED DURING THE INVESTIGATION

The process is non-adversarial and does not provide a role for any other statutory or non-statutory body.

3.3.1 COMPLAINANT

The complainant may be accompanied by another person where it is accepted, by the Principal and Board of Management, that this will assist the investigation and resolution of the complaint.

3.3.2 STAFF

Staff may seek advice and support from their professional body or trade union and may also be accompanied by another person where it is accepted, by the Principal and Board of Management, that this will assist the investigation and resolution of the complaint.

A member of staff who is directly referred to in a complaint will be provided with a written copy of the complaint and details of any information brought by the parent/guardian before being required to respond to the matters raised (refer to 5.3 Formal Stage: Stage 3).

3.3.3 LEGAL REPRESENTATION

Legal representation or representation by person(s) acting in a professional capacity is not permitted within this procedure. This, however, does not take away the statutory rights of any of the participants.

3.4 WHERE A COMPLAINANT IS A MEMBER OF THE BOM

Where the complainant is a member of the Board of Management, they will play no part in the process or appeal of the complaint as set out in this procedure.

4.0 WHO WILL DEAL WITH YOUR COMPLAINT?

At the informal stage your complaint should be raised and dealt with by the teacher concerned. If you proceed to the formal part of the process, the Principal will assume responsibility for the process, unless s/he is the subject of the complaint, in which case the Chair of the Board of Management will assume responsibility. Should it be necessary, the Board of Management will be responsible for establishing a Complaints Sub-Committee to investigate and resolve the matter.

5.0 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

5.1 INFORMAL STAGE: STAGE 1

5.1.1 In the first instance a Parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should approach the class teacher (whether that is the class teacher or Principal) with a view to resolving the complaint.

5.1.2 Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher she/he should approach the Principal with a view to resolving it.

Note: In some circumstances the Principal may not be able to deal effectively with your complaint immediately and may require some time to investigate and prepare a response. If time is required you will be informed of the timescale and the likely date by which a response will be issued.

5.1.3 If the complaint is against the Principal and or is still unresolved (from step 5.1.1) the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving it.

5.2 INFORMAL STAGE: STAGE 2

5.2.1 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.

5.2.2 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.

5.3 FORMAL STAGE: STAGE 3

5.3.1 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.

5.4 FORMAL STAGE: STAGE 4

- 5.4.1 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 5.3.1 b).
- 5.4.2 If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the teacher and the complaint should be so informed within three days of the Board meeting.
- 5.4.3 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 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 5.3.1 b).

5.5 FORMAL STAGE: STAGE 5

- 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 five days of the meeting of the Board.
- 5.5.2 The decision of the Board is final.
- 5.5.3 The INTO / CPSMA will review the complaints procedure shall be reviewed after three years.
- 5.5.4 INTO or Primary School Management (CPSMA) may withdraw from this agreement having given the other party three months' notice of intention to do so.

6.0 RECORD KEEPING

The Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management shall maintain a record of all correspondence, conversations and meetings concerning your complaint. These records shall be held confidentially in the school and shall be kept apart from pupil records. All such records will be destroyed three years after the date of the last correspondence on the issue.

7.0 MALICIOUS OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

Where a Board of Management consider the actions of a parent/group of parents to constitute frivolous or vexatious behaviour, they will seek advice from the relevant Employing Authority in order to protect staff from further such actions.