



# Scoil Mhuire

## **Dignity at Work Policy** **Building and maintaining a positive and effective work environment**

### **Introductory Statement**

We at Scoil Mhuire are committed to protecting the dignity of all those who work within the school. In particular, we are committed to ensuring that our school is free from any form of bullying or harassment at work and that our work environment is conducive to producing a high quality education in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness, safety and equality. All employees of the B.O.M. have a right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Bullying behaviour or lack of respect for others' dignity, by its very nature, imposes psychological damage and undermines and dilutes the quality of work. Management is committed to intervening in an appropriate manner utilising the "Working Together" procedures to investigate and deal with allegations of bullying or harassment. The provisions of Circular 40/97 on Assaults on Staff in Primary Schools will be utilised as appropriate.

Both the school's management and its employees have responsibilities for creating and contributing to the maintenance of a work environment free from bullying and harassment. Employees also have an obligation to cooperate with the investigation of complaints of bullying or harassment in the school.

### **Rationale**

- To raise awareness among the staff of Scoil Mhuire Shankill about the importance of fostering positive relations with each other.
- To recommend guidelines for good practice..
- To set out various procedures to address staff relations difficulties, adult bullying or harassment and grievances.

### **Vision**

This policy reflects our mission statement which states:

*All of the partners in the Scoil Mhuire community; parents, teachers, pupils and management, will work together, underpinned by our Catholic Christian values*

*and beliefs, to ensure that we create the optimum learning/teaching atmosphere in our school. Working together we will support all of our pupils to develop their full potential and to use their diverse talents. We will create an inclusive atmosphere where all of the partners in the school community will treat each other with respect and dignity as partners and as equals.*

Staff who work in Scoil Mhuire will be encouraged to reach their full potential in an atmosphere and environment in which they feel safe, valued and secure and in which respect for self and others is the norm. The staff of our school, conscious of their role in creating a positive working environment, will encourage the involvement of the wider school community in the achievement of these ends through a whole-school approach whereby every individual is involved in the development of a school environment where each person is respected and valued.

## **Aims**

The Dignity at Work policy aims to:

- Create and maintain a positive working environment in Scoil Mhuire whereby the right of the individual to dignity at work is recognised and protected
- Provide awareness regarding the steps which individuals may take if they believe that they have been bullied, harassed, or sexually harassed
- Encourage the use of informal resolution methods and the use of mediation as often and as early as possible during disputes
- Ensure that all staff are aware of and committed to the principles outlined in this policy

## **Creating a Positive Work Environment**

Scoil Mhuire Shankill prides itself on being a good place to work and we will strive to keep it that way, through maintaining:

- A supportive atmosphere
- An inclusive environment
- Good open communication e.g. through opportunities at regular staff meetings, access to management etc.
- Appropriate interpersonal behaviour.
- Collaboration
- Open discussion and resolution of conflict.
- Recognition, feedback and affirmation as appropriate.

- Fair treatment of all staff, including fair systems of selection and promotions in line with agreed procedures.

Every person has a responsibility to play his/her part in contributing to a positive work environment. In this regard, a person who is a witness or a bystander has a clear responsibility to raise concerns about threats to any person's dignity at work in an appropriate and timely manner.

It is intended that the procedures in the appendices 1,2,3 and 4 will provide an overall framework to resolve matters at the earliest opportunity and preferably within the school structures.

### **What is Workplace bullying and harassment?**

The Board of Management adopts the definition of adult bullying as set out by the 2001 Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying:

*"Workplace Bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but, as a once off incident, is not considered to be bullying".*

Harassment is covered by Employment Equality legislation and is based on a person's standing within one of the nine categories (or grounds) specified in that legislation (gender, marital status, family status, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, age, race, membership of the traveller community)

Harassment is defined in law as

*"unwanted conduct" related to one or more of the discriminatory grounds which "has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person."*

Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and/or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

Unlike bullying, a single incident may constitute harassment.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of types of behaviour that may constitute bullying:

- Verbal abuse/insults, undermining remarks
- Exclusion with negative consequences
- Intimidation
- Aggression
- Humiliation, ridicule, belittling efforts
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Withholding work-related information

It is recognised that bullying and harassment complaints may arise among work colleagues but may also arise in relation to visitors to the school. In either case, the commitment to a positive workplace, where dignity at work is respected, prevails.

### **What happens if there is an allegation of bullying or harassment**

Without prejudice to an individual's right to take such advice or steps as they themselves may decide, the Board of Management will take seriously any allegations of workplace bullying or harassment.

Supportive and effective procedures, in accordance with nationally-agreed practice, are in place in this school. These procedures to address and investigate allegations will focus on the earliest possible resolution, will proceed as necessary from informal to formal stages and will have a stress on reasonable confidentiality. Complaints by employees or other persons in the workplace of bullying or harassment at work will be treated with fairness, sensitivity and respect for all parties concerned. Any person accused of bullying or harassment will be afforded natural justice and treated with fairness and sensitivity.

### **Summary**

Management has a duty of care towards employees. Similarly, employees have a duty of care towards one another. This policy seeks to set out principles, practices and procedures to support the exercise of that duty in our school.

Together we are committed to building and maintaining a work environment where respectful, open and equal relationships are the norm.

In summary, we are committed to having a good and safe place to work, where every individual's dignity is respected.

### **Success Criteria**

The following will provide some practical indicators of the success of this policy:

- A positive, collaborative working atmosphere among staff members is maintained in Scoil Mhuire Shankill and the right of the individual to dignity at work is recognised and protected.
- Procedures/steps which individuals may take if they believe that they have been bullied, harassed, or sexually harassed are carried out in accordance with national best practice guidelines
- The use of informal resolution methods and the use of mediation as often and as early as possible during disputes is evident in practice
- In the event that a case of bullying or harassment is identified, procedures are followed and the case has a successful outcome
- All staff are made aware of and committed to the principles set out in this policy

### **Roles and Responsibility**

It is the responsibility of the Principal, Staff and members of the school community to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

### **Implementation**

This policy will be implemented immediately following ratification by the Board of Management and communication to the Parents' Association

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Chairperson): \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Principal): \_\_\_\_\_

Date for Review: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 1 Procedures to address staff relations difficulties**

**Appendix 2 Procedures to address adult bullying/harassment**

**Appendix 3 Grievance procedure for staff**

**Appendix 4 Parent Complaints procedures**

# Appendix 1



# Scoil Mhuire

## Procedure to address Staff Relations Difficulties

### 1. Introduction

The Board of Management recognises that differences of opinion and conflict can arise in any working environment. It is essential that such matters are addressed at the earliest possible opportunity, in a proactive and professional manner, to prevent a breakdown in staff relationships.

All staff members are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. Positive staff relations are underpinned by open communication, mutual respect, and an understanding that compromise is sometimes required. While staff may not always agree with decisions, it is expected that issues can be discussed respectfully, acknowledging the legitimate role of school management in decision-making.

Members of the in-school management team have a key role in fostering a positive school culture where staff feel valued, listened to, and treated fairly.

### 2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, staged procedure to support the early resolution of staff relations difficulties in a fair, confidential and structured manner, in line with *Working Together 2024*.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all teaching staff within the school. Matters involving bullying or harassment, grievances, or statutory employment issues are excluded and must be addressed under the relevant procedures.



## 4. Guiding Principles

The following principles apply throughout this procedure:

- Early and informal resolution is encouraged wherever possible.
- The procedure is incremental and each stage should be exhausted before progressing.
- Confidentiality must be respected by all parties.
- Fair procedures and natural justice apply at all stages.
- The Board of Management will not be involved prior to Stage 4.
- Parties should not engage multiple procedures in parallel.
- Timeframes apply only to school operational days.

## 5. Early Resolution (Informal Engagement)

Prior to invoking the formal stages of this policy, staff members are expected to attempt to resolve issues informally through open, constructive dialogue. Parties may agree to involve a trusted colleague or other agreed person to assist at this stage.

Where informal engagement does not resolve the matter, the formal procedure outlined below may be invoked.

## 6. Formal Procedure for Addressing Staff Relations Difficulties

### Stage 1: Formal Meeting Between the Parties

Where a staff relations difficulty persists, the staff member(s) raising the issue shall be referred to as *Party A*. The staff member(s) alleged to be the source of the difficulty shall be referred to as *Party B*, which may include the Principal Teacher.

Where more than two staff members are involved, a maximum of two representatives should be nominated to act on behalf of the group throughout the procedure.

At Stage 1:

- Party A will clearly identify the areas of difficulty and raise them directly with Party B.
- Party A may propose reasonable suggestions for resolution.

- Party B will respond constructively and may take time to reflect before reconvening.
- Both parties are expected to engage professionally and in good faith.
- One or more meetings may take place.
- A framework for resolution should be agreed within 20 school days, unless extended by agreement.

The outcome of Stage 1 shall be recorded on the agreed Statement of Outcome template.

## **Exclusions**

The following matters are excluded from this procedure:

- Allegations of bullying or harassment (refer to the Bullying and Harassment Policy)
- Breaches of policy or conditions of employment (refer to the Grievance Procedure)
- Matters governed by employment legislation or external statutory bodies

## **Stage 2: Facilitation by the Principal Teacher / Chairperson**

Where Stage 1 does not result in resolution, and where the Principal is not a party to the issue, the Principal Teacher will engage with both parties.

The Principal Teacher will:

- Be briefed on Stage 1 discussions
- Act impartially and seek to facilitate resolution
- Exercise professional judgement where appropriate
- May raise the matter at a staff meeting if deemed helpful

The parties are expected to engage constructively. Resolution should be sought within 20 school days, unless extended by agreement. The outcome shall be recorded on the Statement of Outcome template.

Where the Principal Teacher is a party to the issue, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will fulfil this role.

### **Stage 3: Mediation**

Where resolution has not been achieved at Stages 1 or 2, the parties may, by mutual agreement, engage in mediation. Mediation is voluntary, confidential and solution-focused.

To initiate mediation:

- The parties must request mediation through the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- The Chairperson must seek approval from the relevant Management Body/Patron and INTO.
- An approved mediator will be jointly appointed by INTO and the Management Body.

The mediator will:

- Review documentation provided by the parties
- Meet with the parties and any relevant persons
- Facilitate agreed resolutions

A short written outcome report will be issued at the conclusion of mediation. Mediation should normally be completed within 20 school days.

### **Stage 4: Board of Management**

Where the matter remains unresolved, either party may submit a written request to the Chairperson requesting the Board of Management to intervene.

The Board may:

- Review the background and previous stages
- Seek written submissions and exchange documentation
- Invite oral presentations from the parties
- Convene further meetings as necessary
- Act impartially to reach or direct a resolution

The Board may, where necessary, decide on an appropriate resolution and direct the parties to participate in the same. As a rule, the Board should conclude its deliberations within 20 school days.

A record of the Board's decision shall be made available to the parties. The Board may nominate a person to monitor the resolution for a defined period.

## 7. Confidentiality

All discussions and documentation relating to this procedure are confidential and must not be discussed with staff members who are not party to the process.

## 8. Review and Ratification

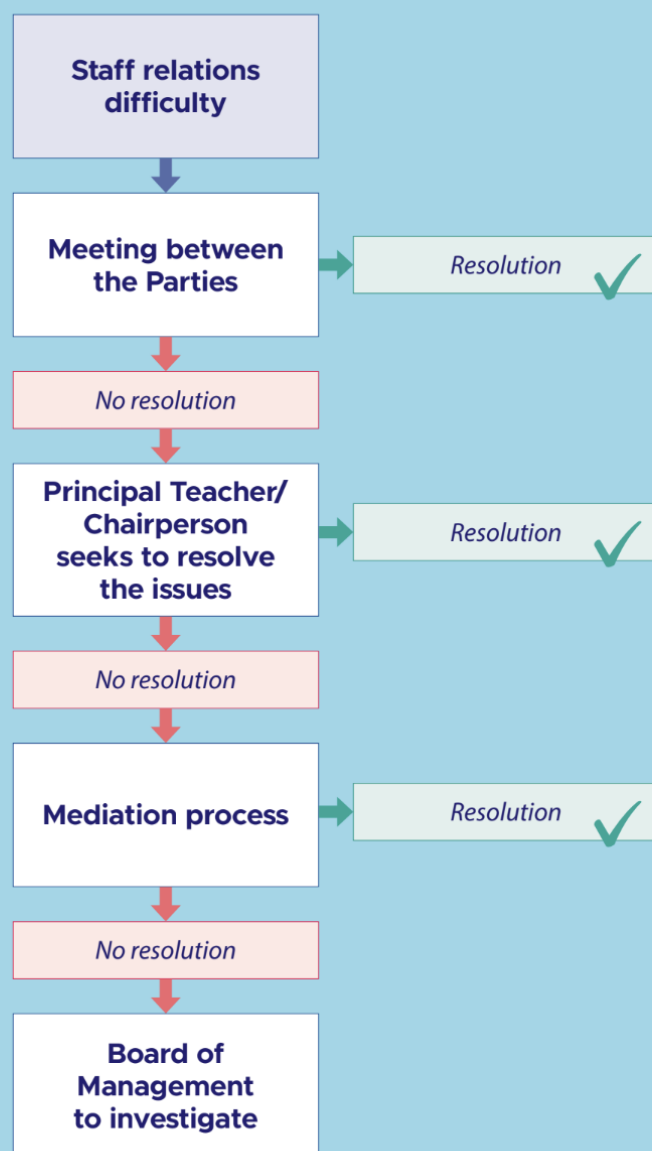
This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Chairperson): \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Principal): \_\_\_\_\_

Date for Review: \_\_\_\_\_

## Summary



## Template 1A

**Party A:**

**Party B:**

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**Date of meeting:**

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**Resolution not achieved** ☐

**Resolution was achieved and the agreed outcome is listed below** ☐

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**Name (Party A):**

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**Signature:**

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Date:

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**Name (Party B):**

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**Signature:**

---

Date:

---

## Procedure 1: Staff Relations Difficulties

### Template 1B

#### Staff relations procedure: Stage 2 outcome

*Principal/Chairperson:*

**Party A:**

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**Party B:**

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**Date of meeting/s with parties:**

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*The outcome of the meeting/s was:*

**Resolution not achieved** ☐

**Resolution was achieved and the agreed outcome is listed below** ☐

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*The outcome shall be signed by:*

**Name (Party A):**

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**Signature:**

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**Date:**

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**Name (Party B):**

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**Signature:**

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**Date:**

---

**Principal/Chairperson:**

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**Date:**

---

**Signature:**

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## Procedure 1: Staff Relations Difficulties

### Template 1C Mediation agreement

#### Parties:

Mediator (named):

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Party A (named):

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Party B (named):

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#### Summary of events:

The mediator met/engaged with the parties on the dates listed below:

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#### Outcome of mediation:

The outcome of the process entered into above was:

Agreement was not achieved ☐

Agreement was achieved and the agreed outcomes are listed below ☐

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#### The Agreement shall be signed by:

Name (Party A):

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Signature:

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Date:

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Name (Party B):

---

Signature:

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Date:

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## Appendix 2



Scoil

Mhuire

## Procedures to address adult Bullying and Harassment

### 1. Introduction

This policy sets out the procedures to prevent and address adult-to-adult bullying and harassment within the school. It is informed by and aligned with:

- *Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work (2021)*
- *Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment and Harassment at Work (2022)*
- *Working Together 2024*

The school is committed to providing a safe, respectful and dignified working environment for all staff. Bullying, harassment and sexual harassment are not acceptable in this workplace and will not be tolerated.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff members of the school, including teachers, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), ancillary staff, and school management, in the course of their employment.

### 3. Guiding Principles

The following principles underpin this policy:

- All staff have the right to dignity and respect at work.
- All complaints will be treated seriously, sensitively and fairly.
- Confidentiality will be maintained insofar as is practicable.

- No party will be victimised for participating in this process.
- Natural justice and fair procedures will apply to all stages.
- A complaint made in good faith will not result in any sanction against the complainant.

A malicious or vexatious complaint may be addressed under the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

## **4. Prevention**

The Board of Management recognises that prevention is the most effective means of addressing bullying and harassment. The school will:

- Promote a positive and respectful workplace culture
- Circulate this policy to staff at least once per school year
- Provide opportunities to discuss the policy at staff meetings
- Ensure complaints are managed in a timely, transparent and respectful manner

All staff have a responsibility to contribute to a safe working environment and to raise concerns where inappropriate behaviour is observed.

## **5. Record Keeping and Data Protection**

Where this procedure is formally invoked, records will be maintained in accordance with GDPR and data protection legislation. Records will be retained only for as long as necessary.

## **6. Supports**

Participation in bullying or harassment procedures can be distressing. Staff are reminded of the availability of the Employee Assistance Service (EAS), which provides confidential and independent support. Union and management body advice may also be sought, as appropriate.

## **7. Definitions**

### **7.1 Bullying**

Workplace bullying is defined as repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. A once-off incident, while potentially inappropriate, does not constitute bullying.

Bullying does not include:

- Reasonable performance management
- Constructive feedback
- Legitimate management actions carried out fairly
- Ordinary workplace conflict

## **7.2 Harassment and Sexual Harassment**

Harassment, including sexual harassment, is defined in the Employment Equality Acts as unwanted conduct related to discriminatory grounds or of a sexual nature, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Intent is irrelevant; the effect of the behaviour is the key consideration.

## **8. Procedure for Addressing Bullying and Harassment**

Staff are encouraged to seek advice before initiating this procedure. Complaints should generally be raised within six months of the alleged behaviour, subject to limited exceptions.

### **Stage 1: Informal Resolution**

Where appropriate, the staff member (Party A) should raise the concern directly with the other party (Party B), either in person or with the assistance of a neutral colleague. The aim is to clearly communicate that the behaviour is unwelcome and request that it cease.

Both parties are expected to engage constructively. A framework for resolution should normally be agreed within 15 school days.

### **Stage 2: Facilitation by Principal / Chairperson**

Where Stage 1 does not resolve the matter, Party A may refer the issue to the Principal. Where the Principal is a party to the complaint, the Chairperson will act in this role.

The Principal/Chairperson will meet with the parties, individually or jointly, and endeavour to facilitate a resolution within 15 school days. The outcome will be recorded.

### **Stage 3: Mediation**

By mutual consent, the parties may engage in formal mediation facilitated by an agreed external mediator. Mediation is voluntary, confidential and solution-focused. Where successful, the process concludes at this stage.

## Stage 4: Formal Investigation

Where the matter remains unresolved, Party A may submit a written request to the Board of Management for a formal investigation within 15 school days.

The Board may appoint an investigator from within the Board (excluding the Chairperson) or an independent external investigator. The investigation will follow fair procedures, including the right to representation and the exchange of documentation.

A written report of findings of fact will be issued to both parties. A procedural appeal of the investigation process may be made within 10 school days.

## Stage 5: Board Decision

Following consideration of the investigation report and responses, the Board of Management will determine whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

Where a complaint is upheld, the Board may:

- Issue a warning
- Require an apology or assurance
- Direct changes to workplace interaction
- Recommend support services
- Invoke disciplinary procedures where appropriate

## 9. External Bodies

Nothing in this policy precludes a staff member from contacting the Health and Safety Authority or other statutory bodies in accordance with their legal rights.

## 10. Review and Ratification

This policy was reviewed and adopted by the Board of Management on: \_\_\_\_\_

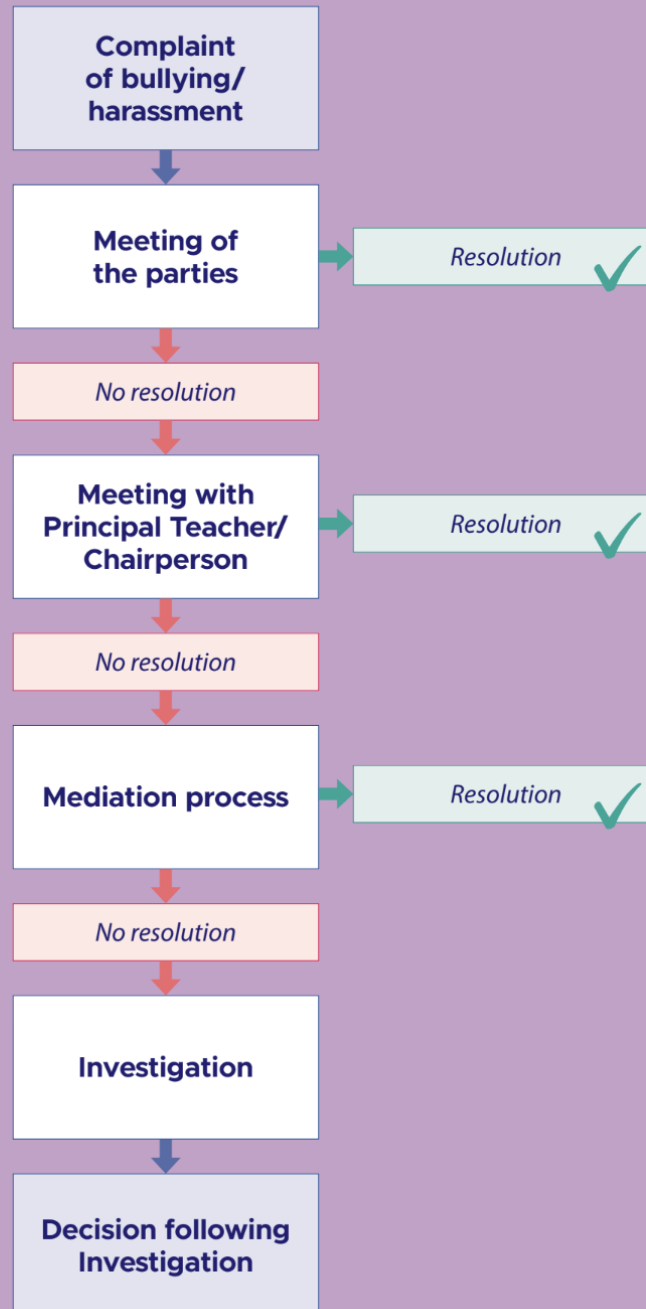
Signed (Chairperson): \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Principal): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_



## Summary



## Procedure 2: Bullying and Harassment

### Template 2A

#### Recording outcome at Stage 2 of the Bullying and Harassment Procedure

##### *Parties:*

Principal/Chairperson (named):

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Party A (named):

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Party B (named):

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##### *Summary of events:*

Met/engaged with the parties on the dates listed below:

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Party A raised complaints which were relayed to Party B: ☐

Resolutions were suggested/sought: ☐

Resolution was achieved at this stage and the matter has concluded: ☐

Any further action required:

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Resolution was not achieved at this stage: ☐

Agreed actions e.g. further check in required, further supports needed by either party etc:

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##### *The agreement shall be signed by:*

Name (Party A):

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Signature:

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Date:

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Name (Party B):

---

Signature:

---

Date:

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## Procedure 2: Bullying and Harassment

### Template 2B Mediation agreement

#### *Parties:*

**Mediator (named):**

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**Party A (named):**

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**Party B (named):**

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#### *Summary of events:*

**The mediator met/engaged with the parties on the dates listed below:**

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#### *Outcome of mediation:*

**The outcome of the process entered into above was:**

**Agreement was not achieved** ☐

**Agreement was achieved and the agreed outcomes are listed below** ☐

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#### *The Agreement shall be signed by:*

**Name (Party A):**

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**Signature:**

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**Date:**

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**Name (Party B):**

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**Signature:**

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**Date:**

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## Procedure 2: Bullying and Harassment

### Template 2C

#### Appeal of the investigation process

*Appellant:*

Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

Party A

☐

Party B

*Investigator/s:*

BOM Nominee/s:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

OR Independent Third-Party name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Investigation Report:

\_\_\_\_\_

Received on:

\_\_\_\_\_

*Grounds for appeal:*

(i) The agreed time scale was not adhered to ☐

\_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Copies of all documentation being considered were not provided ☐

\_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Investigator/s did not meet with Party A/B ☐

\_\_\_\_\_

(iv) No opportunity to avail of representation ☐

\_\_\_\_\_

(v) No opportunity was afforded to respond to Investigator/s' summary record ☐

\_\_\_\_\_

(vi) Investigator/s' draft report not provided for comment on any factual inaccuracies ☐

\_\_\_\_\_

I hereby confirm that I am submitting this appeal to the Chairperson of the Board of Management, or nominated Member of the Board of Management, within the 10-school day appeal window and understand that the outcome of this appeal is final.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Procedure 2: Bullying and Harassment

### Template 2D

#### Notification of appeal to investigator/s

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of this correspondence is to notify you of a formal appeal of the investigation process undertaken by you as part of a formal investigation pursuant to the Bullying/Harassment Procedure set out in Working Together 2024-Ag Obair le Chéile.

Please see below the relevant details.

You are asked to respond in writing to this formal appeal no later than:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your written response must be provided to the following address, marked private and confidential and for the attention of the signatory/s of this notification: (Postal/Email address as appropriate)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Ground/s for appeal:

Please find enclosed a copy of the formal appeal lodged by the appellant for your consideration and response.

Please note a copy of your response will be provided to the appellant.

#### Appellant:

Name:

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

Party A

☐

Party B

☐

Chairperson

☐

Nominee of BOM

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3



# Scoil Mhuire

## Grievance Procedures for Teachers and SNAs

### 1. Definition and Overview

For the purpose of this procedure, a grievance is defined as a complaint which an employee has, or employees have, in relation to breaches of school rules, policies, practices, procedures, acts or omissions of management which affect their employment conditions and/or their roles and/or responsibilities.

The grievance procedure is an **upwards-only procedure** and may not be used to pursue a grievance against another teacher. Matters relating to difficulties between colleagues are addressed through other appropriate procedures.

The purpose of this procedure is to provide a formal mechanism for the resolution of a grievance or grievances which a Teacher or a Principal Teacher in a national school may have against:

- The Principal Teacher, in respect of their duties and responsibilities for the organisation, conduct and day-to-day activities of the school;
- The Chairperson of the Board of Management, in their individual capacity; or
- The Board of Management, as employer, in respect of the exercise of its responsibilities for the governance of the school.

For the purpose of this procedure:

- The party raising the grievance is referred to as the **complainant**;
- The party against whom the grievance is raised is referred to as the **respondent**.

## 2. Preamble

This procedure reflects the principles set out in Statutory Instrument No. 146 of 2000 (Code of Practice on Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures) and is drafted in accordance with due process and fair procedures.

Pending the resolution or determination of a grievance, the **status quo shall be maintained**, and the complainant shall continue to carry out their duties and comply with legitimate instructions of the Principal Teacher or the Board of Management, as appropriate.

Prior to initiating the grievance procedure, it is recommended that the complainant:

- Clearly identify the specific grievance(s) to be addressed;
- Identify the impact of the policy, act or omission on them personally;
- Consider the practicable outcome(s) being sought;
- Identify the respondent.

Where multiple grievances exist, this procedure does not preclude the resolution of one or more grievances at an earlier stage while other unresolved grievance(s) proceed to the next stage.

Advice may be obtained from the INTO and/or the relevant Management Body as appropriate.

## 3. Exclusions

This procedure shall not apply where:

- The grievance relates to a matter referred to an external body under relevant legislation (e.g. Employment Equality Acts) including the Workplace Relations Commission or Labour Court;
- The grievance is anonymous;
- The grievance is unrelated to employment matters.

Where another formal procedure under school policy is already in progress, it is generally expected that such procedure will conclude before this grievance procedure is initiated.

## 4. Essential Features of the Grievance Procedure

- The grievance procedure is initiated only when the grievance is set out **in writing** (letter or email).
- The procedure is **staged** and sequential.
- Grievances should be raised **in a timely and contemporaneous manner**.
- All stages of the procedure are confidential to the parties involved.
- Where the Principal Teacher has a grievance, Stages 2, 3 and 4 apply.
- Where the grievance is against the Chairperson individually or the Board of Management, Stages 2, 3 and 4 apply.
- Representation is permitted at Stages 3 and 4 in accordance with *Working Together – Ag Obair Le Chéile*.
- The procedure is a **domestic forum**; legal representation and electronic recording are not permitted.

A school day refers to a day on which the school is in operation and counts towards the 182-day school year.

## 5. Procedure Stages

### Stage 1: Principal Teacher

1.1 The complainant shall notify the Principal Teacher **in writing** that the grievance procedure is being invoked. The notification shall outline:

- The specific grievance(s);
- The impact on the complainant;
- The resolution(s) sought.

1.2 Within **10 school days** of receipt of the written notification, the complainant shall meet with the Principal Teacher to discuss the grievance.

1.3 Within a further **5 school days**, the parties may meet again in an effort to resolve the grievance.

1.4 If the grievance remains unresolved after **15 school days**, the complainant may proceed to Stage 2.

1.5 Notice of intention to proceed to Stage 2 must be given within **5 school days**.

### Stage 2: Chairperson of the Board of Management

2.1 The complainant shall notify the respondent and the Chairperson **in writing** that Stage 2 is being invoked and provide a summary of the grievance(s) and resolution(s) sought.

2.2 Within **5 school days**, the complainant shall meet with the Chairperson. The Chairperson's role at this stage is facilitative and not determinative.

2.3 Within **10 school days** of the meeting, the Chairperson shall take such steps as considered appropriate to seek resolution.

2.4 Where the grievance is against the Chairperson, a Patron nominee shall carry out the Chairperson's role at Stage 2.

2.5 If unresolved, the complainant may proceed to Stage 3 within **10 school days**.

### **Stage 3: Board of Management**

3.1 The complainant shall submit a **written submission** to the Chairperson for consideration by the Board, outlining:

- The unresolved grievance(s);
- Steps taken at Stages 1 and 2;
- The resolution(s) sought.

3.2 The Chairperson shall furnish the submission to the respondent and facilitate an exchange of written responses in accordance with fair procedures.

3.3 A Board hearing shall be convened, affording both parties the opportunity to be heard. Where the grievance concerns the Principal or Chairperson, they shall attend in an individual capacity and withdraw from Board deliberations.

3.4 The outcome of the Board's deliberations shall be conveyed **in writing within 5 school days** of the hearing.

### **Stage 4: Independent Tribunal**

4.1 Where either party is unwilling to accept the outcome at Stage 3, or where the procedure has not been adhered to, Stage 4 may be invoked.

4.2 An independent tribunal shall be established in accordance with *Working Together – Ag Obair Le Chéile*, consisting of:

- An independent Chairperson selected from the Arbitration Panel;
- One nominee of the INTO;
- One nominee of the Management Body/Patron.

4.3 The tribunal shall conduct its proceedings in accordance with fair procedures and shall endeavour to conciliate. Failing resolution, it shall issue a determination which shall be **final and binding**.



## 6. Records and Confidentiality

Records of formal stages shall be retained securely by the school in accordance with data protection requirements.

## 7. Grievance Procedure for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

The grievance procedure for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) employed in the school shall be implemented in accordance with **Department of Education Circular 0072/2011 – Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures for Special Needs Assistants**.

This procedure applies to SNAs employed by the Board of Management and funded by the Department of Education.

### 7.1 Definition of a Grievance (SNAs)

For the purpose of this procedure, a grievance is a complaint by an SNA relating to:

- Working conditions, duties or responsibilities;
- The application or interpretation of Department circulars, school policies or procedures;
- Treatment in the workplace;
- Acts or omissions of management affecting the SNA's employment.

### Stage 1: Informal Resolution

An SNA should raise the grievance informally with the Principal at the earliest opportunity with a view to resolving the matter without recourse to formal procedures.

### Stage 2: Formal Written Grievance to the Principal

Where the grievance is not resolved informally, the SNA may submit a **formal written grievance** to the Principal. The written grievance should clearly outline:

- The nature of the grievance;
- Relevant circulars, policies or procedures;
- The resolution being sought.

The Principal shall meet with the SNA, if required, and issue a response within a reasonable timeframe. The SNA may be accompanied by a **union representative** at this stage.

### Stage 3: Referral to a Board of Management Nominee

If the grievance remains unresolved, the matter shall be referred to a **nominee appointed by the Board of Management**.

The nominee shall:

- Investigate the grievance;
- Meet with the relevant parties;
- Prepare a report or recommendation for the Board of Management.

### Stage 4: Board of Management Review

The Board of Management shall consider the nominee's report and ensure that fair procedures have been followed. The Board shall issue its decision in writing. The SNA may be accompanied by a union representative at any meeting convened at this stage.

### Stage 5: External Dispute Resolution

Where the grievance is not resolved internally, the matter may be referred externally through the relevant union to appropriate industrial relations mechanisms, including the **Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)** or the **Labour Court**, in accordance with Circular 0072/2011.

## **8. Records and Confidentiality**

Records of formal stages of the grievance procedures for both teachers and SNAs shall be retained securely by the school and managed in accordance with data protection requirements.

## **9. Review of Policy**

This policy shall be reviewed by the Board of Management as required, including following updates to national agreements, Department circulars or legislation.

**Date of Adoption:** \_\_\_\_\_

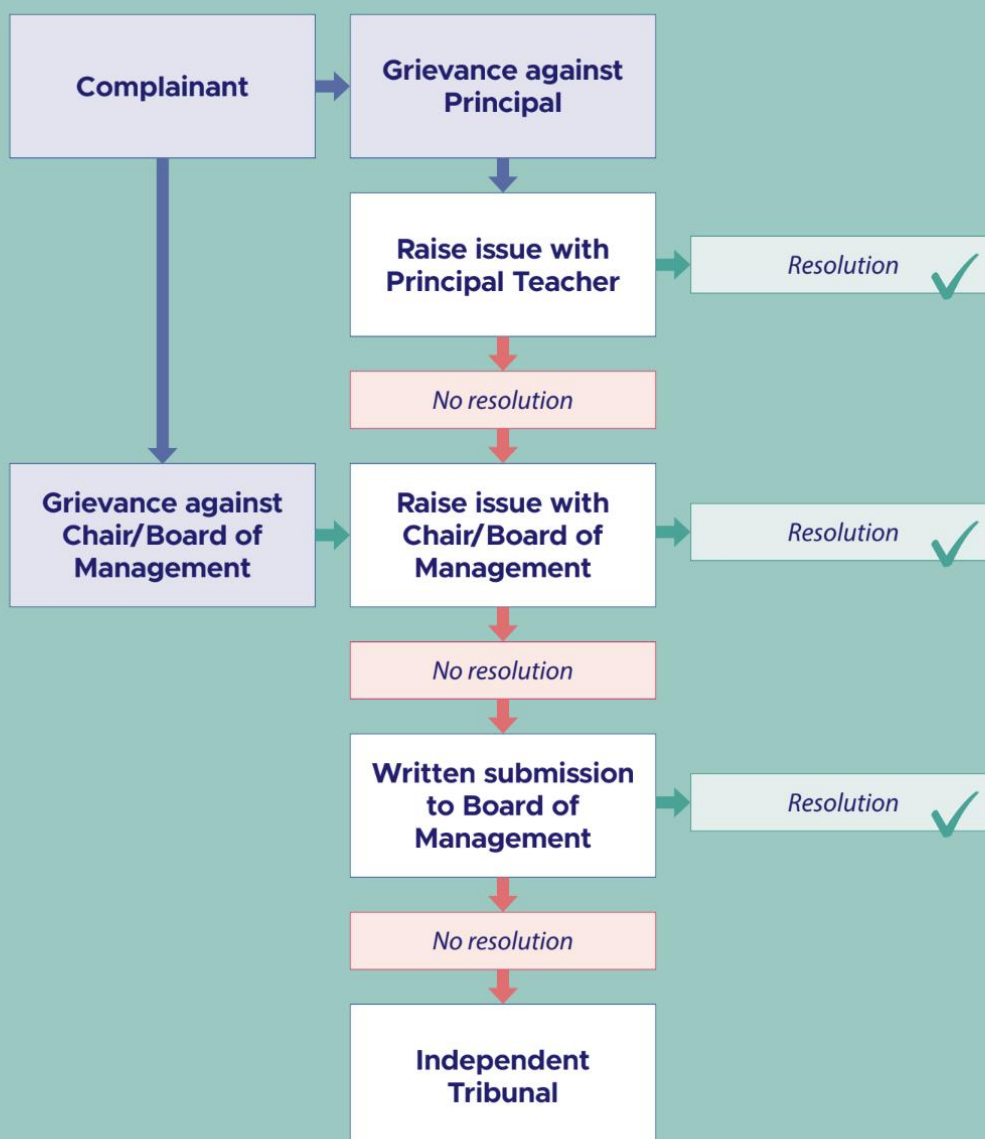
**Signed (Chairperson of the Board of Management):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Principal Teacher):** \_\_\_\_\_

This policy shall be reviewed by the Board of Management as required, including following updates to national agreements or legislation.



## Summary



## Appendix 4



# Scoil Mhuire

## Scoil Mhuire Parent's Complaints Policy

### Introduction

Scoil Mhuire Shankill seeks to encourage and foster positive and respectful relationships and partnerships with all members of the school community, and especially the parents/guardians. We recognise how partnerships and collaboration between schools, families, and communities enrich and extend children's learning by acknowledging and supporting their lives in and out of school.

We recognise that parents/guardians are the primary educators in a child's life and as such, from time to time, concerns may arise about which they may need to engage with our school. It is expected that engagement will be timely, courteous and resolution focused to ensure that the important relationship between the parent/guardian and the school can be preserved and respected. It is expected that all parties concerned will engage proactively.

This policy has been formulated by the Board of Management, staff and Parents Association of Scoil Mhuire to meet its obligations under the Education Act, 1998 to provide procedures to address concerns that may be raised by a parent/guardian, and to formally adopt the revised [Parental Complaints Procedure \(2023\)](#)

## Rationale

This policy formally adopts the recommended [Parental Complaints Procedure \(2023\)](#), which was revised and agreed by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) and the management bodies of primary schools, including the CPSMA.

The purpose of this Parental Complaints Procedure is to facilitate the resolution of concerns where they may arise in an agreed and fair manner.

The purpose of the revised procedure is for a parent/guardian to engage constructively with the school where a concern arises and to have it addressed at local level in an efficient manner, in the best interests of all parties.

This Parental Complaints Procedure provides parents/guardians and teachers with a structured and agreed format with which to seek resolution to grievances and complaints which can arise, from time to time, in schools. Based on the principles of fair procedures, the intention at each stage of the procedure is to provide a format for both parties to explore a resolution at the earliest opportunity.

## Relationship to school ethos, vision and mission statement

All of the partners in Scoil Mhuire's community; parents, teachers, pupils and management will work together, underpinned by our Catholic Christian values and beliefs, to ensure that we create the optimum learning/teaching atmosphere in our school. Working together we will support all of our pupils to develop their full potential and to use their diverse talents. We will create an inclusive atmosphere where all of the partners in the school community will treat each other with respect and dignity as partners and as equals.

Scoil Mhuire Shankill is a Roman Catholic school that "models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ" ([see school ethos on school website](#)). In our vision, it states that "Scoil Mhuire aspires to be a Christian, caring, safe and healthy learning environment".

Our Mission Statement affirms how, in keeping with our Catholic ethos and Christian values, we:

- Are committed to promoting and protecting wellbeing (including physical, mental and emotional health) in our whole school community.

- Seek to create a welcoming, caring, safe, supportive and sustainable learning environment for the children, staff, parents, Board of Management and the wider community.
- View our teachers, SNAs and staff as committed, skilful, and agentic professionals.
- Promote caring relationships and develop strong partnerships between our school, our families and the wider school community.

This policy seeks to support the development of a caring, safe and supportive learning organisation, and our commitment to fostering positive and respectful relationships among all members of the school community, as affirmed in the school's ethos, vision and mission statement.

## Complaints Procedure

The procedure is a staged procedure where every effort is made to resolve matters at the earliest possible stage. In most cases, concerns will be dealt with either informally or formally at the earlier stages of the procedure. Where it has not been possible to agree a resolution at the earlier stages, the procedure does allow for the escalation of the matter to the Board of Management. This procedure sets out, in four stages, the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed. It is expected the parties will follow each stage in sequence.

- Where the term written correspondence is used, this refers specifically to a letter or email correspondence from a parent/legal guardian(s).
- Only complaints about a teacher which are written and signed by a parent/legal guardian, and which relate to their own child, will be investigated.
- 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.

### **Review and communication**

This policy will be reviewed periodically by the Board of Management as deemed necessary.

This policy will be available to view on the school website and will be communicated to the staff, the Parents Association, and the wider school community via the schools various communication channels (eg website, Aladdin and Facebook page). The whole school community will be reminded of the existence of this policy on an ongoing basis.

## Formal Stage 1 Discussion

### 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<sup>1</sup>



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.



## Formal Stage 2 Written (10 days)

### 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 school personnel as deemed appropriate by the Chairperson.

### Complaint resolved

The complaint may be resolved at this stage.



## Formal Stage 3 Board of Management (20 days)

### 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 so 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 complaint 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.

## Formal Stage 4 Decision (5 days)

### 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.



<sup>1</sup>Where a complaint is received about a principal the above process commences at Stage 1.2.