



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 school's 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 Principal¹



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.



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