



RCN No:20113285

Dunderrow National School

Roll No: 169400

Dunderrow, Kinsale, Co.Cork, P17 K504. Tel: 021 4774041 e-mail: info@dunderrowns.ie web: www.dunderrowns.ie

Principal: Triona Hannon

Deputy Principal: Helen O'Callaghan

PARENTAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR DUNDERROW NS

1. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Board of Management together with the Principal set the direction and tone of the school in all that they do and are committed to working with parents in the best interests of their children's education. The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to address complaints raised by parents/ guardians.

1.1 The procedure covers all matters relating to the actions of staff employed in the school and the application of school procedures, where they affect individual pupils. However, schools need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest possible stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

1.2 Where it becomes evident at an early stage that a matter should be dealt with according to other established procedures or appeals mechanisms, this Complaints Procedure will be set aside in favour of the agreed procedures for such areas as Child Protection, Special Education, Admissions, Suspensions and Expulsions, Grievance, Discipline, Bullying and Harassment or Unsatisfactory Teaching Procedure.

1.3 The school will not deal with anonymous complaints (except for those concerning child protection matters) and therefore these procedures do not provide for a resolution of anonymous complaints.

2. AIMS

2.1 In operating this Complaints Procedure we aim to:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- allow swift handling of a complaint within established time-limits for action
- keep people informed of progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation;
- have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved;
- respect confidentiality;
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- provide information to the school's Senior Management Team and Board of Management so that services can be improved.

2.2 The procedures are designed to be:

- easily accessible and publicised. A copy of the procedures will be
- placed on the school's website or available on request from the school;
- user friendly;
- impartial;
- non-adversarial;

3. WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THESE PROCEDURES

3.1 Your rights as a person making a complaint

In dealing with your complaint we 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 about your complaint;
- 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 Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint

In making your complaint we would expect that you:

- raise issues in a timely manner;
- treat our staff with respect and courtesy;
- provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues you raise;
- 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.

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.

Staff

Staff may seek the 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/carer before being required to respond to the matters raised.

Legal Representation

Legal representation or representation by person(s) acting in a professional capacity **is not** permitted within this procedure

This procedure does not take away from the statutory rights of any of the participants.

3.4 Where the complainant is a member of the Board

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

4. WHO WILL DEAL WITH YOUR COMPLAINT?

At the informal stage your complaint should be raised with 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. MAKING A COMPLAINT

5.1 Informal Stage

Step 1 - Speaking with the Teacher concerned

- In the first instance a complaint should normally be raised verbally with the teacher concerned (whether that be a classroom teacher, Deputy Principal or Principal), so that s/he may have an opportunity to address the issue(s). ***Please observe the school's existing protocols for arranging and conducting such meetings and follow the school's policy with respect to access to members of teaching staff.***
- Make an appointment with the class teacher, through the school office, with a view to resolving the complaint. The nature of the complaint should be briefly, but clearly, stated in advance, either verbally or in writing to the teacher. Both parties may request to have another adult with them (member of staff).
- Any parent approaching the Principal with a complaint will be reminded that it is more appropriate to discuss and hopefully resolve the issue with the class teacher in the first instance.
- If the complaint does not relate to a teacher in the school, it should be referred to the Principal.

This approach would not prevent you from choosing to enter the formal process at a later stage, if you believe that to be an appropriate course of action.

Step 2 - Contact the Principal if your complaint is against a member of staff other than the Principal

- If your complaint remains unresolved following Step 1 you should arrange a meeting with the Principal to discuss the issue(s). In advance of this meeting you should inform the Principal briefly of the nature of your complaint so that she may be in a position to resolve the problem without further delay.

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

5.2 Formal Stage

Step 3 – Writing to the Principal if your complaint is against a member of staff other than the Principal

If your complaint has not been resolved at Steps 1 and 2 you should write to the Principal, and state the grounds for your complaint as concisely as possible addressing specifically the issue(s) that are of concern to you.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days.

This will confirm that your letter has been received, and either:

- > provide a response to the issue(s) you raised;
- > state that your complaint is being investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 20 working days from the date on which your letter was received). The investigation may require you to meet the Principal and due

notification will be given of such meetings. The Principal may also talk to the parties relevant to the complaint.

Step 4 - Contact the Chair of the Board of Management if your complaint is against the Principal or if it is still unresolved

- If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further s/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- The Chairperson should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher/ principal and seek to resolve the matter between the parties.

Writing to Chairperson of the Board of Management

If the board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the teacher and the complainant should be so informed within three days of the board meeting.

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.

The BOM may set up a Complaints Sub-Committee of the Board of Management, which will investigate and respond to your complaint. The Complaints Sub-Committee will have a minimum of 3 voting members.

Your written complaint should be as concise as possible and address specifically the issue or issues that are of concern to you. You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received, and:

- provide a response to the issue(s) you raised;
- or
- state that your complaint is being fully investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued (normally a maximum of 25 working days from the date on which your written complaint was received).

The investigation may require you to meet the Complaints Sub-Committee of the Board of Management and due notification will be given of such meetings. The Complaints Sub-Committee of the Board of Management may also talk to the parties relevant to the complaint.

When the board has completed its investigation, the Chairperson should convey the decision of the board in writing to the teacher and the complainant as soon as possible.

5.3 Appeals Process

Step 5 - Appeals Process – Appeals Sub-Committee of the Board of Management

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Board of Management Sub Committee you may write to the Chairperson of the Board of Management within 10 working days of receiving written

feedback from the Complaints Sub-Committee, appealing their decision. Your written request should be as concise as possible and set out specifically the grounds for your appeal.

The Chairperson will be responsible for establishing an Appeals Sub-Committee composed of at least three members of the Board of Management who were not involved in the original investigation. You will be invited to a meeting of the Appeals Sub-Committee where your appeal will be heard.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received and provide you with the date and time of the meeting with the Appeals Sub-Committee at which you will have an opportunity to explain the grounds for your appeal. This meeting will normally take place within 30 working days of your appeal request having been received.

Within 10 working days of this meeting, you should expect a final written response. This will indicate the Management' findings, their recommendations and the reasons supporting their decisions.

The decision of the Appeals Sub-Committee is final. At the end of the process the Chairperson will inform you, in writing, that the Complaints Procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is considered closed.

6. 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. MALICIOUS OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

Where a Board of Management considers 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.

Implementation and Review:

The Policy is currently being implemented and will be reviewed and updated.

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in April 2018.
Reviewed by Staff Policy review 2021

Signed: Seamus McCarthy Date: 21/6/21
Seamus McCarthy
Chairperson, Board of Management

Trine Hanon 21/6/21
Principal

