



## **Complaints Policy, St. Brigid's Primary School, The Coombe**

### **Introductory Statement**

As a school community, we are committed to upholding the ethos of St. Brigid's Primary School, The Coombe and our vision for the school in all our dealings with pupils, parents, one another and with the wider school community.

### **Rationale**

The Board of Management of St. Brigid's Primary School, The Coombe has adopted the Complaints Procedure, agreed by the INTO and Catholic Primary School Management (CPSMA) which provides a mechanism for dealing with parental complaints against a teacher or staff member as set out in Section 28 of the Education Act 1998.

The purpose of this 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.

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.

Only those complaints about staff members which are written and signed by parents/guardians of pupils may be investigated formally by the Board of Management, 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 and Skills;
- 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 Stage 1 of this procedure below.

## **Aims**

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
- 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

## **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 information
- 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.

## **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

## **Complaints Procedure**

### **Stage 1 (Informal Stage)**

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint.
2. Please observe the school's existing protocols for arranging and conducting such meetings.
3. 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 in writing, of the nature of your complaint.

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.

### **Stage 2 (Informal Stage)**

1. 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.
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 five days of receipt of the written complaint.

### **Stage 3 (Formal Stage)**

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the chairperson should, subject to the general authorisation of the Board of Management:
  - a. supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint; and
  - b. arrange a meeting with the teacher and, where applicable, the Principal with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint.
2. The complainant will receive written acknowledgement of his/her letter within 10 working days. This will confirm that the letter has been received, and either: provide a response to the issue(s) you raised, or state that your complaint is being investigated and indicate when you can expect a response to be issued.

### **Stage 4 (Formal Stage)**

1. If the complaint is still not resolved the chairperson should make a formal report to the Board of Management within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3(b).
2. If the Board of Management considers that the complaint is not substantiated the teacher and the complainant should be so informed within three days of the board meeting.
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 3(b).

### **Stage 5 (Formal Stage)**

1. When the board has completed its investigation, the chairperson should convey the decision of the Board of Management in writing to the teacher and the complainant within five days of the meeting of the board.
2. The decision of the Board of Management shall be final.

*In this agreement 'days' means school days.*

### **Record Keeping**

The staff member concerned, the Principal and/or the Chairperson of the Board of Management shall maintain a record of all correspondence, conversations and meetings concerning a complaint. These records shall be held confidentially in the school.

### **Malicious or Vexatious Complaints**

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

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

All stakeholders involved in the education of pupils will take responsibility for implementing the policy.

### **Review**

The Policy will be evaluated regularly by representatives from the whole school community and changes/amendments will be made as necessary.

**Ratification and Communication:** This school policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Brigid's Primary School on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021. It is available from the school upon request.

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021

Signed: Amanda McGarry

Chairperson of the Board of Management