



## St. Finbarr's NS

### Parent/Guardian Complaints Policy 2025

#### Rationale

##### The need for this policy arises from:

Section 28, Education Act 1998 – procedures for processing complaints by parents prescribed for all schools under the Act.

This policy is relevant to complaints relating to teachers/principals/SNAs and bus escorts, as well as to more general school-related complaints.

#### Relationship to School Ethos

The school promotes positive home–school relationships and endeavours to enhance the self-esteem of everyone within the school community. The policy contributes towards those ideals.

#### Aims/Objectives

- To foster fruitful and trusting relationships between the school and parents/guardians.
- To allow parents/guardians to express complaints appropriately through the framework of a defined complaints procedure.
- To appropriately resolve issues and problems arising in class, the yard and other settings.
- To minimise the opportunity for conflict by allowing parents to liaise with the class teacher and school management.

Please note that his policy does not cover:

1. Complaints that are being dealt with through legal channels.
2. Matters of professional competence which come under the remit of the Department of Education and Science.
3. Petty or vexatious complaints which do not relate to the work of a particular teacher or the principal.

## In-School Procedures

If a parent has a complaint in relation to a staff member in the school or in relation to the handling of an incident on yard, the following steps are to be followed. **It is envisaged that engaging openly and positively in**

**Stages 1, 2 and 3 will resolve most issues:**

**Stage 1:** The parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint may meet with the staff member concerned informally in the morning or afternoon and **arrange an appointment** to discuss the issue with the staff member, at a time that is agreed by both parties, with a view to resolving the complaint. **The nature of the complaint being raised should always be briefly outlined before any meeting.** Parents should be aware that a staff member will generally be engaged in during school hours. At this stage, it is normal that a teacher will note the issue with the principal.

If the issue raised concerns the handling of an **incident on yard**, be aware that it will be **necessary for the teacher to talk to the children involved and to the teacher who was on yard before trying to resolve the problem.** This takes time. Also, keep in mind that with young children, it can be difficult to get an accurate account of exactly what happened. As a school, though, we will do our utmost to resolve any problems on yard and to make sure that the yard is a happy place for all to play comfortably.

**\*Stage 2:** If the matter remains unresolved, **the parent/guardian may raise the matter with the principal**, generally by appointment. The principal will approach the complaint with a view to resolving it to the satisfaction of both parties and will discuss the complaint with the teacher in question.

**\*Stage 3:** If the complaint persists, the parent/guardian may pursue the matter by lodging **a complaint in writing with the principal**, who will bring the nature of the written complaint to the notice of the staff member and seek to resolve the issue adequately within 10 school days.

*\*Where the complaint relates directly to the principal, Stages 2 and 3 may be passed over, and the complainant may proceed straight to Stage 4*

**Stage 4:** If this process fails, the parent may make **a complaint in writing to the chairperson of the BOM**, who will supply the staff member with a copy of the written complaint and arrange a meeting with the staff member concerned and the Principal. This will happen within a further 10 school days of the initial period following receipt of the written complaint.

**Stage 5:** If, following this meeting, the complaint remains unresolved, **the chairperson will report formally to the BOM** within 10 school days of the date of the meeting. If the BOM does not uphold the complaint, both parties will be informed immediately. If the BOM considers the complaint warrants further investigations, the teacher will be informed and supplied with any written evidence in support of the complaint.

The staff member will be requested to supply a written statement to the B.O.M. and given an opportunity to make an oral presentation to the Board. The complainant will be offered a similar opportunity.

**Stage 6:** Within 10 school days of the presentation to the BOM, the decision of the BOM regarding the complaint, which is final and binding, is delivered in writing to the staff member and the complainant.

**Procedure for general school-related complaints:**

- Where a complaint arises regarding a general school matter, rather than to a particular staff member, contact should be made with the school through the office to seek to arrange a meeting with the Principal/Deputy Principal.
- The Principal/Deputy Principal will call the parent/guardian back to discuss and arrange a meeting.
- Where a complaint is raised in writing via letter/email, the Principal/Deputy Principal will get in touch with the parent/guardian to make arrangements for a meeting.
- **Stage 1:** A meeting will be arranged with the Principal/Deputy Principal at a time convenient for both parties. It is hoped that such a meeting will allow for issues arising to be aired and for a resolution to the complaint to be reached.
- **Stage 2:** If, following a meeting, a complaint is unresolved, the parent/guardian may pursue the matter by lodging a complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the BOM, who will bring the nature of the written complaint to the notice of the principal and seek to resolve the issue satisfactorily.
- **Stage 3:** If the concern remains unresolved, the Chairperson will report formally to the B.O.M. If the BOM does not uphold the complaint, both parties will be informed immediately. If the BOM considers the complaint warrants further investigations, the principal will be informed and supplied with any written evidence related to the issue.

At this point, the principal will be requested to supply a written statement to the B.O.M. and given an opportunity to make an oral presentation to the Board. The complainant will be offered a similar opportunity.

- **Stage 4:** Following the submission of written and/or oral statements, the BOM shall adjudicate the case and notify all parties in writing. This decision is final and binding.

*Please note that if either party would prefer to have an impartial person present, this can be arranged.*

## Success Criteria

- Swift and efficient resolution of grievances
- Parent/Guardian Teacher satisfaction
- Positive school community feedback
- Reviews of school policies as issues arise.

## Review

This policy will be reviewed by the principal and BOM after a 3-year cycle.

## Implementation

This policy has been reviewed, amended and ratified in 2025

Ratified: 

Signed: 

## Please Note:

### APPEALING TO THE OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN:

The Office of the Ombudsman for Children may independently investigate complaints about schools recognised by the Department of Education and Skills, provided the parent has fully followed the school's complaints procedures first. The key criterion for any intervention by the Ombudsman for Children is that a child has or may have been negatively affected by the action of a school.

The Ombudsman for Children's Office is situated at Millennium House, 52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1 and can be contacted by telephoning 1800 20 20 40 or (01) 865 6800 or by emailing oco@oco.ie.