

Toonagh National School

Revised Parental Complaints Procedure & Parents as Partners Policy

Introductory Statement:

This policy was updated and revised by the staff and Board of Management of Toonagh NS in March 2024. It was updated in line with the revised Parental Complaints Procedures.

The parental complaints procedure was revised and agreed by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the management bodies of primary schools, the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association, the Church of Ireland, An Foras Pátrúnachta, the Muslim Primary Education Board, Educate Together and the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education in 2023. It is designed to provide an open and clearly defined process to facilitate parents/legal guardians in raising concerns about their own child/children in an agreed, fair and transparent manner.

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

Parents are encouraged to:

- Develop close links with the school
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the staff and all staff members in the school
- Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children
- Share the responsibility of seeing that the school remains true to its ethos, values and distinctive character
- Become actively involved in the school/parent association
- Participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting them

Staff are encouraged to:

- Establish good communication with parents/guardians of pupils in their class
- Keep parents/guardians informed of their child's progress and behaviour both positive and negative
- Listen to what parents/guardians have to say and encourage them to bring any concerns to you at an early stage to avoid situations escalating
- Be aware of the role of parents/guardians as prime educators and emphasise that all parties are working together for the child's benefit to help her reach her potential
- Value and respect the input of parents as they know their child best.

Structures in place to facilitate open communication & consultation with parents:

- Meeting for parents of new Junior Infants - in May/June each year.
- Parent/teacher meetings one-to-one in November.
- Parents receive school report of each pupil at the end of each school year
- Meetings with parents whose children have special needs with SET teachers consultation throughout the year.
- School email - Parents can contact their child's teacher about absences or other matters through email.
Aladdin - Teachers can contact parents through Aladdin text messages and emails.
- Written communication - A monthly Newsletter with all the latest news & upcoming events is published every month of the school year.
- Through the parents' association, parents are invited to discuss and contribute to the drafting and review of school policies. Decisions taken to change current policies and procedures or to introduce new ones will be made known to all parents in written format the newsletter/school website.
- Regular notifications and the school website keep parents up-to-date with school events, holidays and school concerns.
- Homework diary 2nd - 6th class, used to relay messages which are signed between parents and teachers. Parents requested to sign diary each night to certify that homework has been completed.
- Parents are invited to share their expertise with their child's class in a structured way.
- Parents are invited to various school events throughout the year e.g., sports day, school masses, sacraments, fundraising events and school concerts.
- Involvement of parents in the relevant activities e.g., GAA- the coaching and mentoring of children.
- Parents are invited to events throughout the year e.g., sports days, coffee mornings, school masses, fundraising events and concerts etc.
- Involvement of the principal where necessary to offer advice and support.
- If a parent wishes to consult with a teacher, he/she can contact the school secretary to arrange a suitable time or email their child's teacher directly.

It is vital that the school is immediately informed if family events/situations occur that cause anxiety to the child and therefore may adversely affect his/her education.

In all matters pertaining to the wellbeing and education of pupils, only the parents/legal guardians named on the enrolment form will be consulted by staff.

Parent/Teacher meetings:

Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a year for all classes (Circular 14/04). These meetings usually take place in November and the date of these meetings will be decided in consultation with staff each year. They will be initiated by the school staff and details regarding time, etc are sent via a letter home, in consultation with parents. Meetings may take place in classrooms and resource rooms. The teachers use prepared guidelines for the meetings and collaborate in advance about the progress of individual children.

The purpose of the parent/teacher meeting is:

- To establish and maintain good communication between the school and parents
- To let parents know how their children are progressing in school
- To help teachers/parents get to know the children better as individuals
- To help children realise that home and school are working together
- To meet demands for accountability
- To share all positives about the child
- To share with the parent the problems and difficulties the child may have in school
- To review with the parent the child's experience of schooling
- To learn more about the child from the parent's perspective
- To learn more about parental opinions on what the school is doing
- To identify areas of tension and disagreement
- To identify ways in which parents can help their children
- To negotiate jointly decisions about the child's education
- To inform the parents of standardised test results according to school policy

Reporting to parents:

Parents have the primary responsibility for their children's learning and development. Schools can strengthen the capacity of parents to support their children in this way by sharing meaningful information about the progress that their children are achieving in the education system. In turn, parents will often be able to enrich staff's knowledge of their pupils' progress through providing further information about the students learning at home.

End-Of-Year Report Cards:

Schools should help parents to understand fully the evidence of learning that the school reports to them, especially information from any standardised tests. The NCCA has provided a range of standard report templates to assist schools in reporting information about the progress of primary pupils to parents, including information from standardised tests. The NCCA report card templates were developed through a process of consultation with schools and parents can take account of research commissioned by the NCCA.

The Report Cards provide reporting in 4 keys areas:

- The child's learning and achievement across the curriculum
- The child's learning dispositions
- The child's social and personal development
- Ways in which parents can support their child's learning

Toonagh NS uses standard report card templates for reporting to parents on students' progress and achievement at school.

Formal Meetings:

Formal timetabled parent/teacher meetings take place in November. However, if a parent wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child, they may do so by prior appointment.

- All communication sent from the school will be sent to the child's home address as given on the enrolment form, unless otherwise requested by parents. Children will also receive communication to deliver. In some cases notices of this information maybe communicated via the child's homework journal or via text message/email.

- In the case of separated parents, requests can be made by both parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings
- Formal meetings can be set up by the teacher at their request or at the request of the principal.

Formal Meetings-IEP'S/Support Files:

Formal timetabled parent/staff meetings on the subject of the **Student Support Files in SET** will take place in September/October. However, if a parent wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child, they may do so by prior appointment.

Informal parent/staff meetings:

- The School encourages communication between parents and staffs
- Meetings with the class teacher at the classroom door to discuss concern is discouraged on a number of grounds:
 1. Staff cannot adequately supervise a class while at the same time speaking to a parent
 2. It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by
 3. It can be embarrassing for a child when his/her parent is talking to staff at a classroom door

Occasions occur where a parent needs to speak to a staff member urgently. Sometimes these meetings need to take place without prior notice. The Principal will aim to facilitate such meetings making every effort to ensure that the children in the class do not lose out on any of the teaching/learning time.

Complaints Procedure

Procedural Points:

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.

Monitoring, implementation and review of the policy:

The implementation of the policy shall be monitored by the Principal, staff and the Board of Management and the policy will be revised as necessary.

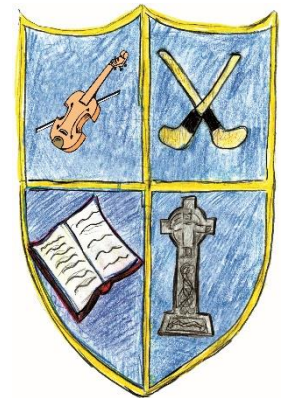
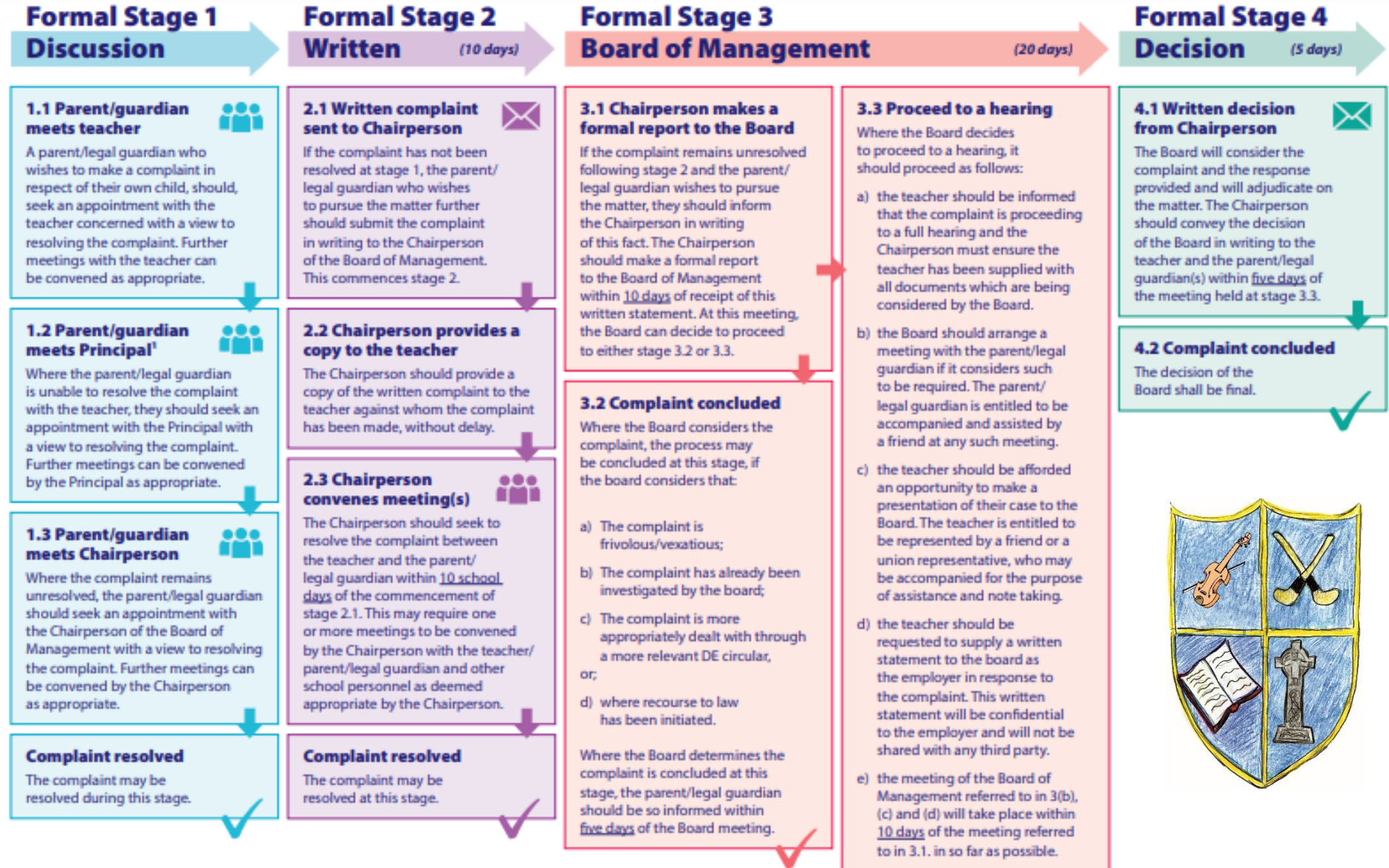
Ratification:

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Toonagh National School at its meeting on 19/03/2024.

Signed: Marie Slattery
(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Date: 19/03/24

Gearóid Roughan
(Principal)



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