



## GETNS Complaints Procedure ( and feedback)

Parents/Guardians may occasionally have a concern about some aspect of school life, wish to provide positive feedback, or have a complaint about a staff member in Greystones ET NS.

Everyone likes to hear positive feedback about their daily work, and the board of management welcomes positive feedback from parents for the staff. If, as a parent/guardian you're really happy with your child's teacher, or other staff member, let them know. If you would prefer to put your feedback in writing, please feel free to drop an email to the Principal on the school office email address.

In the case of complaints, parents may feel reluctant to approach the school and to deal with "the institution", but please be assured that the Board of Management of school, the Principal, and all the staff take parents' concerns very seriously and we want you to let us know of any concerns and issues which you might have.

It is appropriate in most cases firstly to try and resolve the issue by talking with the class teacher, the staff member concerned, and/or the Principal, and most concerns can be addressed in this way.

However the option is open to all parents/guardians to make a more formal complaint.

The Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO), the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and Educate Together have agreed a procedure for dealing with complaints made by parents/guardians. 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 the 5 stages to be followed in progressing a concern or complaint and the specific timeline to be followed at each stage.

### Introduction

The following 5 stages outline the procedures for raising and resolving complaints.

The staff and Board of Management of the school request that out of respect for all involved, the complaints procedure is followed and that complaints are not made in online forums or in social media where the other parties to the complaint may have no right to reply or to fair procedure.

It is also not appropriate to bring a complaint to the Parent's Association. Please follow the process outlined in this policy.

## Stage 1

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to raise a concern, or make a complaint should approach the class teacher or staff member as appropriate, with a view to resolving the complaint.
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the staff member s/he should approach the principal with a view to resolving it.
3. If the complaint is still unresolved the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the chairperson of the board of management with a view to resolving it.

## Stage 2

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 staff member and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within five days of receipt of the written complaint.

Note that only those complaints 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
- frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a staff member 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.

## Stage 3

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the chairperson should, subject to the general authorisation of the board and except in those cases where the chairperson deems the particular authorisation of the board to be required:

a) supply the staff member with a copy of the written complaint; and  
b) arrange a meeting with the staff member and, where applicable, the principal teacher with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint.

## Stage 4

1. If the complaint is still not resolved the chairperson should make a formal report to the board within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3(b).
2. If the board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the staff member 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 staff member should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage;
- b) the staff member should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint;
- c) the staff member should be requested to supply a written statement to the board in response to the complaint;
- c) the staff member should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of case to the board. The staff member would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting;
- d) 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
- e) 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

1. When the board has completed its investigation, the chairperson should convey the decision of the board in writing to the staff member and the complainant within five days of the meeting of the board.
2. The decision of the board shall be final.
3. The Complaints Procedure shall be reviewed after three years.
4. Primary School Management or INTO may withdraw from this agreement having given the other party three months' notice of intention to do so.

In this agreement 'days' means school days.

## Unhappy with the Outcome of a Complaint

If following the completion of an investigation at school level you remain unhappy with the outcome, you may contact the Department of Education and Skills on **090 6484009**. While the DES does not have legal powers to instruct schools to follow a particular course with regard to individual complaints or to investigate individual complaints, the Department will advise you on what further options are open to you. These options will include:

- **Appealing to the Ombudsman for Children.** The Ombudsman does not have the power to look at the individual incidents or complaints but can, if it deems appropriate, examine the administrative actions of a school recognised with the DES, provided the parent has firstly and fully followed the school's complaints procedures.

The key criterion for any intervention by the Ombudsman for Children is that the action of the school has had a negative effect on a child. The office can be contacted at: Ombudsman for Children's Office, Millennium House, 52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1; tel: 1800 20 20 40 or (01) 865 6800.

- If you feel that there is a child protection issue, i.e. if you feel the child has been physically or psychologically damaged or is at risk, you can report this to the Department of Education and Skills by telephoning (090) 648 4099 or by emailing **childprotection@education.gov.ie**. Any child protection concern reported to staff in the Department is dealt with in accordance with the Department's Procedures for responding to Child Protection Concerns brought to the attention of staff employed by the Department of Education and Skills. Under these procedures the Department does not pass judgment on concerns brought to its attention and ensures that the details of the concern available to the Department are immediately passed on to the relevant investigatory authorities, including the relevant school authorities, the Health Service Executive and/or An Garda Síochána. The Department cannot guarantee confidentiality to those reporting child protection concerns as the information it receives must be passed on to the relevant authorities for investigation, including any details of the person reporting the concern. The Department does not have a role in investigating child protection concerns; statutory responsibility for child protection rests with the HSE.
- Alternatively Parents who wish to invoke the child protection procedures do not have to process their complaint directly to the Department of Education and Skills but can alternatively make direct contact with Health Service Executive and/or the Ombudsman for Children.
- Parents can also contact the Patron of the School, Educate Together. Educate Together contact details can be found here: <https://www.educatetogether.ie/about/contact>

## Revision History

Version	Date	Comment
0.1	27/10/2015	First draft of clarified complaints procedure
0.2	27/10/2015	Escalation paths identified explicitly
0.4	03/11/2015	Clarified following internal review
0.5	23/11/2015	Additional comments added
0.6	13/12/2015	Added updated flowchart

## Ratification

Ratified by Board of Management  
 on

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed by:

\_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson)

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_