



# ALEXANDRA COLLEGE DUBLIN

## Parental Complaints Procedure for Alexandra College Junior School

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### THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE - Alexandra College Junior School

#### 1. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Board of Management together with the Junior School Head 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. **1.1** 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 procedure such 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 and keeping people informed of progress;
- 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; and
- 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;
- simple to understand and use;
- impartial; and
- 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; and 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; and
- 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 Junior School Head 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 Junior School Head 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 member of the BOM**

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 and dealt with by the teacher concerned. If you proceed to the formal part of the process, the Junior School Head 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, Junior School Head/ Assistant to Junior School Head), 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.

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.

*If the complaint does not relate to a teacher in the school, it should be referred to the Junior School Head.*

## **Step 2 - Contact the Junior School Head if your complaint is against a member of staff other than the Junior School Head**

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 Junior School Head in writing, of the nature of your complaint so that s/he may be in a position to resolve the problem without further delay.

In some circumstances the Junior School Head 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.

## **Step 2 - Contact the Chair of the Board of Management if your complaint is against the Junior School Head**

If your complaint remains unresolved following Step 1 you should write to the Chair of the Board of Management. Step 4 of the procedure will then commence.

### **2. 5.2 Formal Stage**

#### **Step 3 – Writing to the Junior School Head if your complaint is against a member of staff other than the Junior School Head**

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to have your complaint resolved through the informal processes proposed at Steps 1 and 2, or indeed it might be more appropriate to initiate the procedures at Step 3. You should write to the Junior School Head, 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; or
- 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 Junior School Head and due notification will be given of such meetings. The Junior School Head may also talk to the parties relevant to the complaint.

### **5.3 Step 4 - Writing to Chairperson of the Board of Management**

If you believe that your complaint has not been dealt with in a satisfactory manner following the completion of steps 1 – 3, or if your complaint concerns the Junior School Head you should write to the Chair of Board of Management, including, if applicable,

copies of the original correspondence relating to Step 3. The Chairperson will be responsible for referring your complaint to 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 Governors may also talk to the parties relevant to the complaint.

#### **5.4 Step 5 - Appeals Process – Appeals Sub-Committee of the Board of Governors**

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 comprising 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 Boards' 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 Junior School Head 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 consider 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.