



Policy on Complaint / Grievance Procedures (Incorporating Stress in the Workplace)

The Board of Management of Caheragh National School is responsible for safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of persons working in the school. This responsibility extends not only to pupils and teachers but also all other persons working in the school, both during school hours and outside school hours, and employed directly or indirectly by the Board.

The Board recognises that all relationships in the workplace have the potential to create stress for those working there and that such stress may amount to an illness requiring medical treatment. In particular, the Board recognises that bullying and sexual harassment can cause stress, as can the calling into question of a worker's personal and / or professional reputation or skills by the making of a complaint about their conduct.

The Board **will not condone bullying or harassment of any type in the workplace**. This is outlined in Caheragh National School's Anti-Bullying Policy.

A complaint is defined as: something that is the cause or subject of protest or outcry; or a formal allegation against a party.

The Board has a responsibility to safeguard workers, in so far as possible, against stress and stress related illnesses.

The Board is of the view that the achievement of this objective requires:

1. That the Board's policy in relation to workplace relationships be clearly stated and communicated to all those having an interest in same.
2. That adequate mechanisms and procedures for dealing with and resolving difficulties which may arise from workplace relationships (including complaints by and about workers) are put in place.
3. That the existence and nature of such mechanisms and procedures are communicated to all those having an interest in same.

Existing Procedures for Good Practice:

A key asset to working in any school is where **positive staff relations are promoted**. The principal management bodies of primary schools and the INTO are of the view that it is incumbent on the staff and management of each school to promote a culture of positive working relations at all times. Where such a culture prevails, instances of adult bullying or harassment or staff conflict rarely occur. In the event of difficulties in the workplace, clear and specific procedures are vital. With this in mind the Church of Ireland Board of Education, the Catholic Primary School Managers' Association, the National Association of Boards of Management of Special Schools, Educate Together and the Irish National Teachers' Organisation have recommended good practice.

These guidelines are published in the **C.P.S.M.A. Management Board Members' Handbook - Revised 2007**. A copy of this document is available in the school.

Relevant Procedures:

- Appendix 20 – Pages 198: Positive Staff Working Relations
- Appendix 21 – Pages 204: Bullying / Harassment
- Appendix 22 – Pages 208: Grievance Procedure (*Staff Issues*)



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- Appendix 50 – Pages 318: Complaints Procedure (*Complaints by Parents*)

The principal, deputy principal, chairperson and board members should ensure that they are up to date with current guidelines and procedures and should always refer to the appendices listed above.

The appropriate procedures to be adopted in relation to the difficulties experienced in a workplace relationship will necessarily vary depending on the relationship in question. Accordingly, it is necessary to deal with the various relationships separately.

Pupil / Staff:

The Board recognises that a pupil has a right to complain of the manner in which he/she is being treated by a staff member in the school. Ordinarily one would expect such complaints to come via the pupil's parents or guardians. However if the pupil is capable of articulating a complaint then the fact that his/her parents have not become involved does not justify disregarding it. In such circumstances arrangements should be made for the pupil to discuss the matter with the principal, whether the pupil seeks such an opportunity or not. Another adult (staff member, board member, the child's parent) may be invited to be present at this discussion.

The staff member about whom the complaint is being made should not be present during such a discussion. However he/she should be informed as soon as possible thereafter of the nature of the complaint. The staff member will be invited to respond to the allegation. He/she will be informed of the steps which the principal proposes to take, whether by way of further investigation or otherwise. In the event of a pupil making a complaint about the principal, the deputy principal and/or the chairperson of the Board will discuss the matter with the pupil and investigate further if necessary.

A record should be maintained of the complaint made and of the staff member's response to the complaint. He/she should be entitled to inspect this record and should be entitled to furnish an explanation thereof in writing, which should be added to the record.

The pupil's parents or guardians should be kept fully informed of the complaint and the steps taken.

Staff / Pupil:

Where a teacher has a complaint about a pupil which he/she has been unable to deal with as a matter of routine classroom discipline, the complaint should be referred to the principal. This also applies to complaints by non-teaching staff about pupils.

The teacher/staff member is entitled to be kept informed by the principal of the steps, which are taken in relation to any such complaint. The principal should advise the member of staff of any contact which he/she has with the parents or guardians in question in relation to the said complaint.

Parent / Teacher:

(Refer to CPSMA Handbook: Appendix 50 – Page 318: Complaints Procedure)

Parents are always expected to address complaints they may have with the teacher in question. Where an issue remains unresolved and a parent has a complaint to



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make about a teacher the complaint should be made in the first instance to the principal unless of course the teacher in question is the principal.

Where any complaint is made about a teacher directly to the Board, or any member thereof including the chairperson, without first being raised with the principal, the parents should be advised as to the appropriate procedure and the Board should take no steps in relation thereto.

Where, by reason of the seriousness of the complaint or for any other reason, the principal feels unable to deal with same, he/she may refer the matter to the Chairperson of the Board of Management who shall convene a meeting of the Board to deal with the matter.

Where the parent is dissatisfied with the manner in which his/her complaint is being or has been dealt with by the principal, the parents should be advised to write to the Chairperson of the Board outlining the reasons for his/her dissatisfaction whereupon the chairperson will convene a meeting of the Board consider the matter.

Staff / Staff:

(Refer to CPSMA Handbook: Appendix 22 – Pages 208: Grievance Procedure)

Where a member of staff has made a complaint about another staff member (other than the principal) the complaint should be made to the principal. The other member of staff concerned is entitled to be informed as soon as practical of the nature of the complaint being made and to be offered an opportunity to be heard in relation thereto. The principal should not require the complaint to be made in the presence of the member of staff about whom the complaint is being made, nor should he/she require the last mentioned teacher to offer an explanation or defence of his/her behaviour in the presence of the complaining member of staff.

If the principal, by reason, of the seriousness of the complaint or for any other reason feels unable to deal with the matter, he/she should refer to the Chairperson of the Board of Management who will convene a meeting of the Board to consider the matter.

If the principal proceeds to deal with the matter and either of the parties involved is dissatisfied with the manner in which it is dealt with by the principal, then, either party should be entitled to raise the matter with the chairperson of the Board who will convene a meeting of the Board to deal with the matter.

Staff / Board member:

(Refer to CPSMA Handbook: Appendix 22 – Page 208: Grievance Procedure)

Where a member of staff has a complaint which relates to the behaviour of a member of the Board in his/her capacity as a member of the Board, such complaint follows the grievance procedure as outlined in Appendix 22 of the CPSMA Handbook.

In any situation where the Board is investigating a complaint by or concerning a staff member and requires either party to attend a Board meeting at which the said complaint will be discussed; such party shall be entitled to be accompanied by a legal advisor or a representative from his/her union. If the peer, against whom the



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complaint is made is a member of the Board of Management that person shall withdraw from all meetings while the matter is discussed.

The Board of Management shall act in a fair and impartial manner in order to achieve resolution and shall deal with the matter sensitively, having due regard to the problem.

Ratification & Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Caheragh National School at a meeting on _____. A copy is available in the Plean Scoile.

All staff will be issued with a copy of this policy on employment and have access to the CPSMA Handbook through the principal. Parents and students are informed on enrolment and regularly reminded of the complaints procedure through newsletters, meetings and on the school notice board. Copies of the complaints / grievance procedures are available on request from the school office.

This policy will be reviewed as necessary.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____