



**St Patrick's GNS, Hollypark**

**Roll Number: 19259W**

## **Communications Policy**

### **Version Control**

<b>Version 1.0</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>Version 2.0</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>Version 3.0</b>	<b>2021</b>

**Ratified on: 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

**Signed:** Arthur Hutchinson

**Arthur Hutchinson, Chairperson, BOM**

At the time of drawing up this policy, all details and the enclosed information are correct. It is possible that between now and the review date, changes may have to be made to the provisions, policies and procedures of the school. This may be due to external changes required by the Department of Education and Skills, the school patron or other agencies. Mandatory policies will be available on the school website and up to date information will be posted regularly.



---

### **Introductory Statement and Rationale**

This policy was first developed by the staff of St. Patrick's Girls National School, the Board of Management and the Parents' Association in the school year 2014 - 2015. It was last reviewed in 2018. This version (version 3.0) reflects the changes in school communications due to the development of the school's electronic communication systems.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to parents and staff on parent/staff meetings and parent/staff communication in St. Patrick's GNS, Hollypark. The family and home are central to the social and intellectual development of the child and the nurturing of good, moral values. The school and the family strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other so that the child's education can be effective. All the stakeholders aim to work for the benefit of the child and their learning.

We value open, positive communication with our parents. You, as parents are the primary educators of your children and are valuable members of our whole school community.

We seek always to maintain a positive and welcoming atmosphere. However, for all staff members in our school the priority is teaching and learning for each and every pupil. Class teacher contact time with her pupils is paramount. Every minute of teaching time lost has a direct impact on the learning of all our pupils.

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

Your daughter's happiness and wellbeing are a priority for all staff members in St. Patrick's GNS, Hollypark.

### **This policy is informed by the following established school policies:**

- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Code of Behaviour
- Culture of Respect
- Data Protection Privacy Statement
- Acceptable Usage Policy



---

## Internal School Communications

- Teacher-children communication in the classroom, the yard and around the school
- Child to child communication on a formal (as part of planned classwork) or informal basis (e.g. at play, during reception time in the morning etc.)
- Principal's formal and informal communication with members of staff on an individual basis or in groups and regular contact with absent members of staff
- Teacher-teacher meetings. Teachers carry out informal meetings on a daily basis, before school, during school and after school
- Regular staff meetings – including circulation of Agenda, Minutes and Points from the Principal
- Frequent and regular Senior Management Team (SMT) Meetings
- Frequent and regular In-School Management Team (ISM) meetings
- Frequent sub-committee meetings and feedback
- Use of intercom and daily announcements
- Internal and external communication via Aladdin and Teams
- Staff feedback and input via forms/surveys on Aladdin and Teams
- Staffroom and other noticeboards
- Staffroom Calendar/Diary on which the different classes' planned events are recorded
- Assemblies & class talks
- Classroom visits from the Principal, other teachers and the school secretary
- Teachers co-planning, shared teaching, relieving teachers in the same class grouping to provide opportunities for meetings and discussions.
- Access to all school policies and plans on One Drive
- Events organised by Staff Social Committee

### Pupil Voice

The pupil voice is central to all teaching and learning in our school. Our pupils' leadership skills are developed through assuming various responsibilities including engagement on:

- Student Council
- Green Schools Committee
- Creative Arts Council
- Science Blast
- Debating Teams
- Sports Teams Captains
- Pupils regularly take the lead in whole school assemblies
- Pupils model best behaviour for younger pupils through Buddy systems, peer reading and other such learning opportunities

## Home-School Communications

### Parents are encouraged to:

- Develop close links with the school
- Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their child/children
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the staff of the school
- Support the school in developing the full potential of their children



- Share the responsibility of ensuring that the school remains true to its ethos, values and distinctive character
- Become actively involved in the Parent Association (see below)

### **Hollypark Parent Association**

The Education Act, 1998 clearly outlines the role of the parent association in primary schools

- The Parent Association works in collaboration with the principal, staff and the board of management to build effective, positive partnership of home and school.
- Educational research on the involvement of parents in schools shows that children achieve higher levels when parents and teachers work together.
- The Parent Association is not a forum for complaint against either an individual teacher or parent. The Complaints Procedure is the mechanism for this. (Appendix A)

### **In Hollypark GNS our PA:**

- Represents parents at school events
- Invites speakers to address the parents on issues which are topical or relevant.
- Organises school fundraising: Cake Sales, fairs, sponsored walks, Jumpathons, Christmas cards, calendars etc
- Organises various receptions:
  - ≈ Junior Infant Welcome Morning
  - ≈ Communion and Confirmation Receptions
  - ≈ Graduation Receptions
- Organises second hand uniform sale

### **Hollypark PA Communication Systems:**

- PA Committee meets every month
- PA chair meets regularly with School Senior Management
- PA communicates with general parent body via email, the school website and PA Class Whatsapp (Appendix C)

### **General Home School Communications**

- Principal's Weekly Newsletter emailed to whole school community and published on school website [www.hollyparkgns.ie](http://www.hollyparkgns.ie)
- Regular communications to parents/guardians via Aladdin, email, texts and school website [www.hollyparkgns.ie](http://www.hollyparkgns.ie) (Ref: Acceptable Usage Policy)
- Regular updates on Twitter @hollyparkgns
- Workshops and webinars are organised by the school team for parents/guardians throughout the school year
- Parents are welcomed into the school throughout the school year to school events; eg; Sports Day, school Masses, sacraments, school concerts etc
- The Board of Management holds regular meetings (minimum 5 per year) at which the Principal's Report and Child Safeguarding Oversight Report is always presented
- The Board of Management attends the Parent Association AGM
- Parental Consent and Permissions Form is completed and updated annually by parents/guardians and kept securely in the school.
- Other Parental Permissions for events during the year are processed via Aladdin
- Attendance/absence notes/Return to School Declaration Forms are completed by parents/guardians via Aladdin

### **Information for Parents**



- 
- A Welcome Information Day for parents of incoming Junior Infants is held in the third term of the year preceding enrolment.
  - A Welcome Pack for parents of new pupils is distributed digitally
  - Information Powerpoints outlining curricular content and expectations are presented to parents at class level in the first term



---

**Class/Pupil Handover**

- The staff team is very aware that September is an important transitional time for our pupils. There is always a formal and comprehensive handover between outgoing and incoming class teachers.
- Parents will always be informed when there is a change of staff mid-year and there will always be a formal and comprehensive handover to ensure a smooth transition and continuity of learning.

**Homework**

- Details of daily or weekly homework is communicated via the Homework Journal or Aladdin
- The Homework Journal is an appropriate means of home - school communication – early collection/ appointments /length of time spent on homework/missing uniform, tracksuit etc

**Annual School Reports**

- School Reports Cards are issued to all parents/guardians via Aladdin at the end of each school year
- To support the smooth transitioning of our pupils to secondary school, 6<sup>th</sup> Class Educational Passports (School Report, 'My Child's Profile' (completed by parents) and 'My Profile' (completed by pupil) are posted directly to the relevant secondary school.

**Formal Parent Teacher Meetings**

- 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 children realise that home and school are working together
  - ≈ 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 identify ways in which parents can support their children
  - ≈ To collaborate on decisions about the child's education
- Support Team PT Meetings take place in October via Teams
- Formal Parent/teacher meetings for all other pupils in 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Classes take place in November via Teams
- Review of support Plans take place in February via Teams
- Formal Parent Teacher Meetings for Junior and Senior Infants take place early in the second term via Teams
- Transition Plans and end of year review for Support Plans takes place in June
- PT Meetings will be initiated by the school staff who will use the Aladdin PT Scheduler to set up dates and times in consultation with parents.
- Children are not permitted to attend the formal Parent Teacher meeting.
- Ten minutes is allocated for each of these meetings.
- It is considered best practice for both parents to attend at the same time – and this can now be readily facilitated through Teams.

**Informal Parent/Staff Meetings**

**It is vital that the school is immediately informed by you in writing, if family events/situations arise that cause anxiety to your child and therefore may adversely affect her education.**



---

Teaching time begins at 8:30am (J1-2<sup>nd</sup>) /8.40am (3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>) each day. However, in the case of an emergency please do not hesitate to contact Suzanne in the office directly.

Parents/guardians who wish to have a meeting with a teacher or the Principal are asked to make an appointment through the office (01 2893293/hollyparkgns@gmail.com). Parents are respectfully reminded **that the teacher is the initial and primary point of contact**.

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. Parents and staff should be aware that both parents/legal guardians have access to all home-school communications unless the school team has been informed otherwise.

The school encourages communication between parents and staff. However, meetings with the class teacher at the class door to discuss a child's concern/progress are not facilitated on a number of grounds:

- A teacher cannot adequately supervise his/her class while at the same time speaking to a parent
- It is difficult to be discreet when so many children are standing close by
- It can impact on the self-esteem of a child when her parent is talking to the teacher/SNA at a classroom door.

Occasionally a parent may need to speak to a staff member urgently and sometimes these meetings need to take place without prior notice. In this event, please contact the school secretary.

#### **Phone calls to the school**

- It is expected that all phone communication between home and school is respectful and positive
- If you wish to make an appointment to speak to a member of staff please phone the school office at 01 2893293 (Monday to Friday 8:30am-3:30pm)
- When ringing the school office please give your name and your daughter's name to the school secretary so that she can best facilitate your enquiry.
- You will be asked to indicate the nature of your concern.
- Class contact time is paramount. However, the teacher will endeavour to respond to your call at the earliest possible opportunity.
- A parent/guardian who has an issue of concern, should **at all times** bring the issue to the attention of the class teacher first.
- Parents will not have access to staff private phone numbers or private emails.

#### **Written Communications to School**

It is expected that all written communication between home and school is respectful and positive.

- The **Homework Journal** should be used for daily communication between home and school – eg: medical appointments/early collection/missing uniform etc
- **Aladdin** may be used for reporting absences and to complete Return to School Declarations
- General inquiries to the school should be made to the school email: [hollyparkgns@gmail.com](mailto:hollyparkgns@gmail.com) (Monday to Friday 8:30am - 3:30pm)
- Staff undertake to respond in a timely and appropriate manner.

**In the case of an emergency or urgent message parents should contact the school office directly by phone 01 2893293.**



---

**Written Communication to School during periods of Remote Learning**

- Remote Learning will be delivered via Teams/Seesaw/Aladdin.
- Parents and teachers may communicate via Teacher email. We respectfully request that all email communications be scheduled Monday to Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm.
- General inquiries to the school should be made to the school email: [hollyparkgns@gmail.com](mailto:hollyparkgns@gmail.com)
- Staff undertake to respond in a timely and appropriate manner.

Forgotten lunch boxes, sports gear etc. can be handed in at the secretary's office as it is important to keep class disruptions to a minimum.

Parents are strongly discouraged from taking pupils out of school during term time in order to facilitate family holidays. Since the inception of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 schools are obliged to report absences in excess of 20 days to Tusla.

All communication sent from the school will be sent to the child's home address as given on the original Admissions Form, unless otherwise requested by parents.

Information on the child's Admissions Form is stored securely and regularly reviewed to ensure that all details, in particular the list of emergency telephone numbers are up to date.

## **Communications with External & Other Agencies**

**NEPS**

- Engage with psychologist to identify pupils for support/assessment.
- Liaison between NEPS and parents to establish direct and indirect involvement as required.
- Facilitate team meetings to feedback results/recommendations etc to parents and staff.

**SENO**

- Link between the school team and the NCSE team
- Ongoing communication regarding school resources - staffing, resource hours, SNA access, cohorts etc
- Guidance regarding the application process for further resources as needed
- Collaboration regarding school placement for pupils as required
- Regular communication regarding CPD events

**Hollypark BNS**

- Shared school community
- Shared events
- Shared campus – resources, pitch, security, access etc
- Policies especially Admissions Policy

**Lycée Francaise d'Irlande:**

- Hollypark GNS teacher based in LFI
- LFI teacher: French lessons for 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Classes
- Liaison re First Penance & First Communion



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to campus</li> <li>• Shared yard space</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary Schools:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents Information Evenings</li> <li>• 6<sup>th</sup> Class Transitions/School Reports</li> <li>• Access to resources in local secondary schools – pitches/halls etc</li> </ul>
<b>Other schools:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coláiste Eoin/Iosagán – Banna Ceoil SnaG</li> <li>• St Augustine’s Special School – Banna Ceoil - SnaG</li> <li>• CRC School Clontarf – Shared interest in music/drama</li> <li>• National Children’s Choir – affiliation involving rehearsing/performing with other primary schools</li> </ul>
<b>Community Garda</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road safety and local traffic issues</li> <li>• Fire Safety (Hallowe’en)</li> <li>• Cyber safety</li> </ul>
<b>Traffic Warden</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road safety</li> <li>• Cycle/scooter safety</li> </ul>
<b>DLRCoCo</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local traffic calming measures</li> <li>• Road Safety</li> <li>• Safe Cycling</li> <li>• Grants relevant to school development</li> <li>• Local development issues</li> </ul>



---

## Procedure for Resolving Issues of Concern

Parents are reminded that the staff of St Patrick's GNS, Hollypark are always prepared to listen and it is in the best interests of pupils to resolve difficulties at an early stage.

A parent/guardian who has an issue of concern, should **at all times** bring the issue to the attention of the class teacher **first**. All meetings can be arranged through the school secretary or through a note in the Homework Journal or through an email to the school office [hollyparkgns@gmail.com](mailto:hollyparkgns@gmail.com) or directly to the teacher's email. You will be asked to indicate the nature of your concern when arranging the meeting.

When ringing the school office please give your name and your daughter's name to the school secretary so that she can best facilitate your enquiry.

If your concern is in relation to special education needs or provision, the class teacher is the first point of contact. If deemed necessary, the support teacher will also attend the initial meeting. If the issue remains unresolved the SENCO (Ms Marnell, Deputy Principal), may attend the follow up appointment to attempt to resolve it.

If the issue remains unresolved it may be necessary to bring it to the attention of the Principal. All meetings with the Principal can be organised through the school secretary. On occasion the Principal may request the presence of another staff member at the meeting.

If the matter remains unresolved, the parent/guardian has further recourse available to them through the Parental Complaints Procedure see below.

The Parent Association is not a forum for complaint against either an individual teacher or parent. The **Complaints Procedure** (below) is the mechanism for this.

### Behaviour of all Stakeholders in the School

Positive and respectful communication is of high importance to our school. This not only extends to the children but to all of the stakeholders, that is staff, parents and the wider community. Anyone entering our building should feel safe to do so. While the behaviour of children in our school is of vital importance, adults in the school community also have a responsibility to ensure their own behaviour models the types of behaviour expected of children.

It is important that all stakeholders are responsible for their own behaviours in the school. Examples include:

- All stakeholders are expected to speak to each other with respect. Shouting or other aggressive tones are not acceptable. If a stakeholder displays anger or aggression to another member of the school community, they may be asked to remove themselves from the building. In certain cases, the Gardaí must be called
- All stakeholders will treat our children with the utmost respect while on the premises
- Staff should not be asked to speak about another parent's child. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy so it is asked that parents respect other children's rights to privacy



- 
- When stakeholders meet, it is important to respect that the time of meetings should be kept to a reasonable amount of time. Times of meetings should be agreed beforehand and these should be respected.

We value your cooperation and sincerely appreciate your on-going support and interest in your child's learning.

### **Review**

This policy will be subject to regular review and update.



---

## Appendix A

### THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

**SCHOOL NAME: St Patrick's GNS, Hollypark Roll Number: 19259W**

The INTO and Primary School Management reached agreement in 1993 on a procedure for dealing with complaints by parents against teachers. 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 in five stages the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed at each stage. Please note this is a non-statutory procedure.

Only those complaints about teachers 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 and Skills;
- 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.

Unwritten complaints, not in the above categories, may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

#### Stage 1

1. A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, unless there are local arrangements to the contrary, approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint.
2. Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher 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 teacher and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within five days of receipt of the written complaint.

#### 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 teacher with a copy of the written complaint; and



- 
- 
- b. arrange a meeting with the teacher 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 teacher 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 teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage;
  - b. the teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint;
  - c. the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the board in response to the complaint;
  - d. the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of case to the board. The teacher would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting;
  - e. 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
  - f. 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 teacher 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.

#### **RECORD KEEPING**

The Principal 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.

#### **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.

**Note:** The vast majority of complaints are resolved locally and informally. However, in certain circumstances, for example, where a complaint is considered to be serious in nature, or where the teacher is required to submit a written response to his/her board of management, the teacher should contact his/her INTO District Representative or INTO Head Office for advice and assistance. In advising a teacher, the INTO will be anxious to ensure that there is due process and fair procedures applied, which generally include:

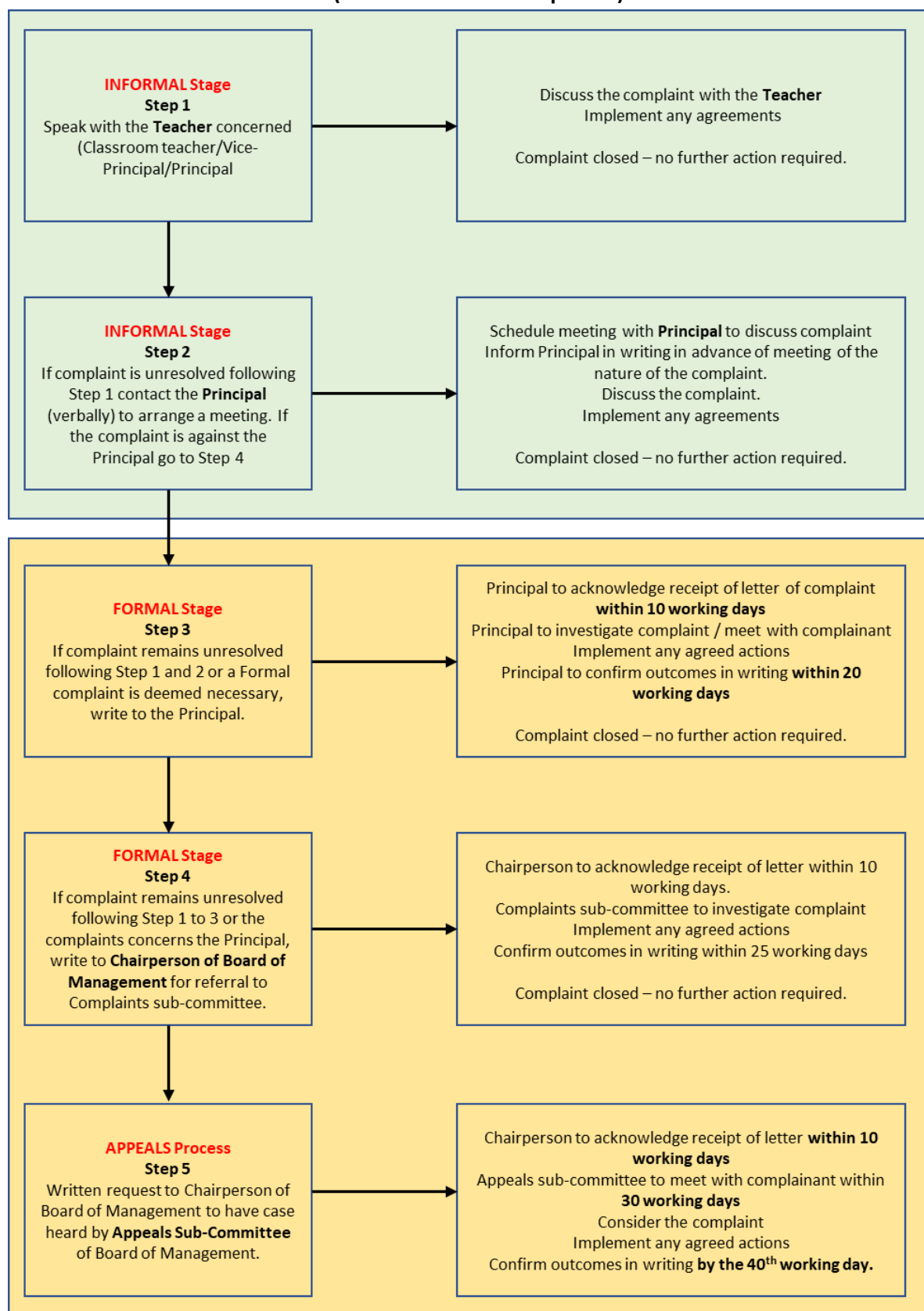
- that the teacher is fully appraised of all matters being considered by the board of management, including being provided with copies of all relevant documentation;
- the right to respond and adequate time to prepare a response;
- entitlement to be represented by the INTO, if necessary.

Where a teacher contacts the INTO in relation to a complaint(s) made against him/her, the officials involved will generally meet with the teacher and require him/her to provide detailed written information and documentation on the matter. The officials will assess the case and decide if additional specific legal advice or a legal consultation is required. Specific legal advice is obtained for members in accordance with the Rules of the INTO and the conditions prescribed by the CEC.



## Appendix B

### PARENTAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FLOWCHART (With timescale for responses)





---

## Appendix C

### PA Class Whatsapp Guidelines (ref: Acceptable Usage Policy)

1. The Class WhatsApp group is set up by the PA Class Reps, with the Class Rep as administrator. Class Reps may communicate school-related issues with parents. The group administrator, will have the right to restrict admission, remove or ban anyone from the group without any notification. Please do not use the group to discuss non-school related issues.
2. **Group administrators are not responsible for any comments posted by individual members of the group but are obliged to report to the School Principal.**
3. Inappropriate posts include - posting promotions, using inappropriate language, collating data from polls for establishing group consensus, personal attacks or insulting messages, bullying of any member or staff member, voicing grievances with the school or with individual members of the group.
4. Whatsapp groups are not a forum for communicating grievances. If a parent wishes to address a concern they must follow the steps clearly outlined in the School Complaints Procedure (Communications Policy). For individual concerns, please raise these directly with the parent concerned, teacher or, where necessary, the Principal.
5. Under no circumstances should the group be used to post private or confidential messages or express personal opinions or gossip. Any opinions expressed are the opinions of individual members and may not be representative of the whole group.
6. If your message is not relevant to the majority of group members, please reply by way of a personal message. In the event of too many messages being posted that are only relevant to a minority of group members the group administrator may request the conversation be continued outside the group.
7. Please respect the time you post. Early in the morning, late at night and during school holidays are discouraged where possible.
8. It is important that your child takes responsibility for their learning including homework; the Class Whatsapp Group is not the appropriate forum to discuss or share homework.
9. For after-school or extra-curricular activities queries, please contact the teacher/organiser of the classes.
10. By accepting a request to join the group, participants agree to these group rules. Please note, by accepting the request to join, you are sharing your phone number with other parents within your child's class. Once you join, you always have the option to leave the group.