

# Grievance Procedure

The following procedure for handling grievances in schools has been agreed between the INTO and the principal management bodies.

The purpose of this procedure is to provide a mechanism for the resolution of a grievance which a teacher in a national school, including a principal teacher, has against:

1. the board of management in respect of the exercise of any of its responsibilities for the governance of the school; or
2. the chairperson of the board in an individual capacity; or
3. the principal teacher in respect of his/her duties and responsibilities for the organisation, conduct and day to day activities of the school.

The grievance procedure shall generally relate to breaches of school rules, policies, procedures or practices. The grievance procedure shall not deal with curricular matters.

If a grievance, which concerns a matter covered by the Employment Equality Act (1998) or other relevant legislation, is referred to the Director of Equality Investigations or the Labour Court, this procedure shall not be used. Such a referral would serve to terminate the grievance procedure.

## Stage 1: The Principal

1. The aggrieved teacher shall give notice in writing to the principal that the grievance procedure is being invoked.
2. The teacher shall discuss the grievance with the principal teacher with a view to resolving it.
3. If the grievance is not resolved within ten school days, the teacher shall be entitled to invoke stage 2, within a further ten school days.

## Stage 2: The Chairperson

1. The aggrieved teacher shall give notice in writing to the principal and chairperson of the board of management that stage 2 of the grievance procedure is being invoked.
2. The teacher shall discuss the grievance with the chairperson of the board with a view to resolving it.
3. The chairperson shall immediately take such steps as she/he considers appropriate to have the grievance resolved informally.
4. If the grievance is not resolved within ten school days the teacher shall be entitled to invoke stage 3, within a further ten school days.

## Stage 3: The Board of Management

1. The aggrieved teacher shall give notice in writing to the chairperson of the board of management that stage 3 of the grievance procedure is being invoked.
2. The teacher shall make a written submission which shall include the details of the grievance(s) and the redress being sought. The submission shall be presented to the chairperson for consideration by the board of management.
3. The normal rules of due process shall apply to the exchange of documentation, (c/f section b, pgs 12 - 13) and accordingly, the chairperson shall copy the submission to the person against whom the grievance is being taken.
4. Where the grievance involves the principal teacher, she/he shall be requested by the chairperson to prepare a written response to the submission. The written response shall address all of the points made in the aggrieved teachers' submission and shall be furnished to the aggrieved teacher(s) within 10 school days of the date of the written submission. Similarly, where the grievance is against the chairperson of the board of management or the board itself, the aggrieved teacher shall be entitled to a written response from the chairperson or the board, as the case may be. Such response shall also be furnished within 10 school days.
5. The chairperson shall invite the aggrieved teacher to be in attendance at a hearing of the board, which shall be held within ten school days of the date of the written response. The hearing shall afford each party to the grievance an opportunity to hear at first hand, what the other party has to say and also to question and/or respond to the other party.

6. In circumstances, where the grievance is against the principal teacher, he/she shall attend at the board hearing in an individual capacity and not as a member of the board of management. Similarly, where the grievance is against the chairperson of the board of management (in an individual capacity) he/she shall also attend at the board hearing in an individual capacity and an acting chairperson shall be appointed. Further, the principal teacher or the chairperson, as the case may be, shall withdraw from the board's deliberations and decision making on the matter.
7. Where appropriate, the parties shall be entitled to bring witnesses. The same principles of due process apply to hearing witnesses.
8. The board shall try to resolve the grievance by conciliation and if the grievance is resolved the matter is concluded. If the board is unable to resolve the grievance by conciliation it shall make a decision on the matter, except as provided under paragraph 9 below.
9. In cases where the grievance is against the board itself, the board shall hear the grievance as outlined above, shall try to resolve the matter by conciliation, but failing resolution, the matter may proceed to stage 4 in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 11 below .
10. The chairperson shall convey the outcome in writing to the parties within 5 school days of the hearing specified at stage 3 / paragraph 5 above.
11. The teacher shall have the right to invoke stage 4 of the procedure:
  - if the board fails to give a hearing to the aggrieved teacher;
  - if the chairperson fails to convey the outcome of the hearing within the specified period;
  - or
  - if the teacher is unwilling to accept the outcome of stage 3.

#### **Stage 4: An Independent Tribunal**

1. The teacher who wishes to proceed with an appeal to stage 4 shall give notice of same, by letter, to the chairperson of the board of management, within ten school days of receiving the written outcome of stage 3 (or at the end of the period specified in stage 3 / no. 5, if the board fails to arrange a hearing). The date of that letter shall be referred to as the "date of appeal" and the teacher may include, in the letter, any additional arguments he/she wishes to put forward.
2. On receipt of the letter of appeal, the chairperson of the board of management shall notify the patron (or a designated representative of the patron) and the General Secretary of the INTO (or a designated representative of the INTO) and invite these parties:
  - to select an agreed independent person to act as chairperson of a tribunal;
  - each to appoint a person who is not associated with the school to serve
  - on the tribunal;
  - to arrange a meeting of the tribunal within 15 school days of the date of appeal.
3. The chairperson of the board of management shall also furnish each member of the tribunal, prior to its first meeting:
  - with a report on the proceedings at each of the previous stages;
  - and with:
    - a copy of the aggrieved teacher's letter of appeal;
    - a copy of the aggrieved teacher's submission;
    - a copy of any written response;
    - any other relevant documentation.
4. The tribunal shall arrange a hearing(s) for the parties and shall ensure that the normal rules of due process and fair procedures apply (c/f section b, pgs 12 - 13), which include:
  - that the parties shall be given reasonable notice of the hearing by the tribunal. When notifying parties of the date of the hearing(s), the tribunal should indicate to the parties concerned that in the event of failure to appear, without reasonable cause, the tribunal may proceed to decide the case if considered appropriate;
  - that each party shall be afforded an opportunity to access and respond to relevant documentation, including the letter of appeal;
  - that the parties shall have an opportunity to hear at first hand, what each has to say and also to question or respond to the other party through the chairperson of the tribunal;

- that witnesses may attend as appropriate; that the tribunal itself, shall be entitled to question each party or seek further information;
- that where appropriate, the tribunal shall afford each party an opportunity to provide further information, on the clear understanding, that the other party shall have an opportunity to access and respond to same; and
- that if necessary, the tribunal shall agree to adjournments.

5. The tribunal shall be considered a domestic forum and accordingly, neither management nor the INTO intends that there would be legal representation at any hearings.

6. The tribunal shall be empowered to conciliate with a view to reaching a friendly settlement.

7. Failing such a settlement the tribunal shall determine the issue by unanimous or majority vote.

8. The tribunal's decision shall be conveyed in writing by the chairperson of the tribunal to all the parties and shall be final and binding.

Please note that any expenses involved in stage 4 will be shared by the parties who nominate the tribunal provided that prior sanction for same has been obtained from INTO and the relevant management body.

## **Notes**

1. Until such time as the dispute is resolved or determined the aggrieved teacher shall continue to carry out the legitimate instructions of the principal teacher or the board of management as the case may be.
2. The grievance procedure shall also apply where two or more teachers share a grievance.
3. Where a principal teacher, or a principal teacher and one or more other teachers, share a grievance, stages 2, 3 and 4 of the procedure shall apply.
4. Where the grievance is against an individual chairperson or the board of management itself, stages 2, 3 and 4 of the procedure shall apply.
5. Where there is a single manager as opposed to a board of management, stages 1, 2 and 4 only shall apply. In these circumstances the aggrieved teacher shall supply a written submission at stage 4, and the normal procedures of due process will apply to the exchange of documentation and the right of response.
6. An aggrieved teacher(s) may be represented at stages 3 and 4 by the INTO staff representative or by a branch or district committee member or by a teacher colleague.
7. Attention is also drawn to paragraph 15 of the Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure, particularly with regard to disclosure of interest.
8. Where the aggrieved teacher is a member of a religious order, the INTO will consult her/his representative association before nominating a member of the independent tribunal envisaged in stage 4.
9. A school day is a day on which the school is in operation.
10. Any difficulty arising out of the implementation of this procedure shall be referred for resolution to the parties to this agreement.