

Patron: Rt. Rev'd Paul Colton
Chairperson: Mr. Stephen Spillane
Principal: Mr. Eddie Pepper
Roll No: 13648D
Registered Charity No: 20111373



The Board of Management,
St. Luke's National School,
O'Mahony's Avenue,
Montenotte, Cork
T23DF30

St. Luke's NS Parental Communication and Complaints Policy 2026

Developed by: St. Luke's NS in consultation with staff, and Board of Management in
2025/26 School year

1. Introduction and Rationale:

The Board of Management recognises that parents and legal guardians are the primary educators in a child's life. To support this, we strive to create a school culture based on mutual respect, trust, and shared responsibility.

This policy outlines the procedures for regular day to day communication and the specific steps to be followed in the event of a parental complaint. **It is designed to ensure that all engagement is courteous, respectful, timely, and resolution-focused, preserving the important relationship between home and school.**

This Policy should be read alongside the revised parental complaints procedure which can be found on the school website in the Policies section - "Parental Complaints Procedures from Jan 2024." These are the procedures agreed by relevant bodies in education.

Core Principles:

- **Respect & Dignity:** All members of the school community—pupils, staff, and parents—are entitled to be treated with dignity. We expect all engagement to be courteous and resolution-focused.
- **Trust:** We ask parents to trust that staff act in the best professional interests of the children.
- **Proactive Engagement:** We expect all parties to engage proactively and positively to resolve issues.

2. Guidelines for Communication with Teachers/Staff

Effective communication is essential for the well-being of the children in St. Luke's. To ensure teachers can focus on teaching and learning, the following protocols apply:

2.1 Methods of Communication

- **Notes/Homework Journal:** For minor queries or information.
- **Aladdin:** Absences, early collection/sign out and other minor queries.

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- **Email:** Parents may email teachers directly to set up meetings for more serious issues or complaints. The principal does not need to be copied on these emails as in the first instance, all matters relating to the class should be directed to the relevant class teacher. Class teacher emails can be found on the school website. Teachers/staff are not required to open or answer emails during weekends, days off or holiday periods. Please allow 1-2 working days for a teacher to respond to an email. Teachers/staff are required to respond to emails during working hours only. We appreciate your understanding of this.
- **Principal Email:** If contacting the principal please allow 2-3 working days for a response. The principal in our school has one admin day per week. The principal should not be contacted about complaints pertaining to teachers or staff until the correct procedure outlined below has been followed.
- **Phone:** Parents may contact the school office to request a call-back or meeting. Please note that teachers are in class during the day and may not be able to respond immediately. Also note that our secretary is part time and messages may not be received until after school or the next day.
- **Scheduled Meetings:** Formal Parent-Teacher meetings are held annually. Additional meetings can be arranged by appointment.

2.2 Appointments

- **Should be Pre-arranged:** Drop-in meetings at the classroom door or in the yard are strongly discouraged as they disrupt supervision and teaching time, and are not conducive to resolving issues. In order to deal with an issue or complaint effectively, teachers and staff need to be prepared with relevant information.
- **Preparation:** When requesting a meeting, parents should briefly outline the nature of the inquiry. This allows the teacher to prepare the necessary information to make the meeting productive.
- **Timing:** If you have a concern, please raise it in a timely manner. It is in the best interests of the child to achieve early resolution while the pupil is still in that teacher's class. Meetings will be scheduled at a time convenient to both parties, typically outside of formal teaching hours so that children's learning is unaffected.

3. Respectful Language and Conduct

To maintain a supportive school climate, it is expected that all parties concerned will engage proactively and positively .

3.1 Expectations of Behaviour

- **Courtesy:** Engagement must be courteous and resolution-focused. Aggressive behavior, raised voices, or intimidating language towards staff will not be tolerated. If this occurs, the meeting will be immediately terminated and parents/staff will be advised to reschedule for another time.
- **Dignity in the Workplace:** The Board of Management acts as the employer. Staff are entitled to a workplace free from harassment and hostility.

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- **Resolution Focus:** The goal of communication should always be to resolve the issue in the best interests of the child, rather than to apportion blame.

The Board of Management creates a safe workplace for staff and a safe learning environment for pupils. The following behaviours are **not acceptable**:

- Aggressive, or intimidating language/tone (verbal or written) towards any member of staff or other parents.
- Sarcasm and/or dismissive language is not acceptable or pertinent to a productive, collaborative conversation/interaction.
- Physical aggression or threats.
- Disrespectful communication in front of children.

Parents can expect staff to engage and communicate in a professional manner. Staff are expected to model respectful behaviour/communication when interacting with parents and children in our school in line with our goal of creating a safe, harmonious and respectful environment.

3.2 Social Media and Electronic Communication

- Complaints or grievances should not be aired on social media groups (e.g. class WhatsApp groups or Facebook). This goes against the core principles of this policy and the core values of dignity, courtesy and respect as set out in this, other policies and our school values and culture.
- Posting defamatory or negative comments about the school, staff, or other children online or in social media groups breaches the school's policies and may have legal implications.

The following are expectations in relation to this policy:

- **Privacy:** Parents must not post images or information about other people's children or staff members on social media without express permission.
- **Grievances:** Social media (including WhatsApp class groups) should **never** be used to air grievances about the school or staff.
- **Cyberbullying:** Defamatory, offensive, or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the pupils/parent/staff body on online forums will be treated as a serious breach of this Code of Conduct.
- **Staff Personal Lives:** It is not acceptable to intrude on or disrespect the privacy and personal lives of staff members whether online or otherwise.

4. The Formal Complaints Procedure

The procedure is a staged procedure where every effort is made to resolve matters at the earliest possible stage. It is expected that parties will follow each stage in sequence. Failure to do so may result in reverting to an earlier stage in the process and thus delay the procedure and necessary outcomes.

The following procedure is taken directly from the agreed "Parental Complaints Procedures from Jan 2024." These are the procedures agreed by relevant bodies in education.

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Note regarding Principals: Where a complaint is received about a Principal, the process commences at Stage 1.2

Note: This procedure applies to complaints raised by a parent/legal guardian regarding their own child.

Formal Stage 1: Discussion

- **1.1 Parent Meets Teacher:** A parent/legal guardian who wishes to make a complaint in respect of their own child should seek an appointment with the teacher concerned with a view to resolving the complaint.
- **1.2 Parent Meets Principal:** Where the parent/legal guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the teacher, they should seek an appointment with the Principal with a view to resolving the complaint.
- **1.3 Parent Meets Chairperson:** Where the complaint remains unresolved, the parent/legal guardian should seek an appointment with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving the complaint.
 - **Note:** Further meetings can be convened by the relevant parties at each step as appropriate .
- **Complaint Resolved**

Formal Stage 2: Written (10 School Days)

If the complaint has not been resolved at Stage 1:

- **2.1 Written complaint sent to the Chairperson:** The parent/legal guardian who wishes to pursue the matter further should submit the complaint **in writing** to the Chairperson of the Board of Management. This commences stage 2.
 - **Note:** Written correspondence must be supplied to the Chairperson only .
- **2.2 Chairperson provides a copy to the teacher:** The Chairperson should provide a copy of the written complaint to the teacher against whom the complaint has been made, without delay .
- **2.3 Chairperson Convenes a Meeting:** The Chairperson should seek to resolve the complaint between the teacher and the parent/legal guardian within **10 school days** of the commencement of stage 2.1 .
 - This may require one or more meetings to be convened by the Chairperson with the teacher/parent/legal guardian and other school personnel as deemed appropriate by the Chairperson.
- **Complaint Resolved**

Formal Stage 3: Board of Management (20 School Days)

If the complaint remains unresolved following Stage 2 and the parent/legal guardian wishes to pursue the matter, they should inform the Chairperson in writing of this fact .

- **3.1 Chairperson makes a formal report to the Board:** If the complaint remains unresolved following stage 2 and the parent/legal guardian wishes to pursue the matter, they should inform the Chairperson in writing of this fact. The Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board of Management within **10 days** of receipt of this written statement. The Board will decide to proceed to either Conclusion OR Hearing:
- **3.2 Conclusion of Complaint:** The Board may conclude the process at this stage if it considers that:
 1. The complaint is frivolous/vexatious;
 2. The complaint has already been investigated by the board;
 3. The complaint is more appropriately dealt with through a more relevant DE circular;

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4. Where recourse to law has been initiated.

Notification: Where the Board determines the complaint is concluded at this stage, the parent/legal guardian should be so informed within **five days** of the Board meeting.

- **3.3 Proceed to Hearing:** Where the Board decides to proceed to a hearing, it should proceed as follows :
 - **Teacher Notification:** The teacher should be informed that the complaint is proceeding to a full hearing and supplied with all documents which are being considered by the Board .
 - **Parent Meeting:** The Board should arrange a meeting with the parent/legal guardian if it considers such to be required. The parent is entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend.
 - **Teacher Presentation:** The teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of their case to the Board. The teacher is entitled to be represented by a friend or a union representative, who may be accompanied for the purpose of assistance and note taking.
 - **Written Response:** The teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the board as the employer. This statement will be confidential to the employer and will not be shared with a third party.
 - **Timing:** The meeting of the Board referred to above will take place within **10 days** of the meeting referred to in 3.1, in so far as possible.

Formal Stage 4: Decision (5 School Days)

- **4.1 Written decision from the Chairperson:** The Board will consider the complaint and the response provided and will adjudicate on the matter. The Chairperson should convey the decision of the Board in writing to the teacher and the parent/legal guardian(s) within **five days** of the meeting held at stage 3.3 .
- **4.2 Complaint Concluded:** The decision of the Board shall be final.

5. Scope and Exclusions

Group/Collective Complaints: These are not provided for and each parent/legal guardian raising a concern will be dealt with separately through this process .

Holidays: Holiday periods, school closures and leaves of absences are not counted as school days for the purpose of this procedure .

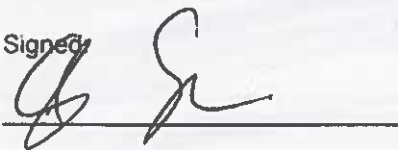
Legal Representation: The procedure is a domestic forum and accordingly, neither management nor the INTO or other bodies intend that there would be legal representation at any stage .

6. Ratification and Review

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2026. It adheres to the national procedures agreed in 2023. A copy of this procedure is available to parents on the school website and/or on request from the school.

This Policy will be reviewed every 4 years or as is required in line with departmental/legal guidance.

Signed:



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Chairperson BOM

Date: 13/1/26

Principal

Date: 13/1/26

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