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Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure

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Defined Terms

This section provides a description of the defined terms used in this policy. These will be capitalised throughout the document.

Complainant	The staff member raising the Grievance.
Formal Grievance	This type of Grievance occurs when an Informal Grievance remains unresolved through dialogue.
Grievance	Any concern, problem, or complaint raised by a staff member relating to their employment or workplace.
Informal Grievance	This type of Grievance is typically resolved through dialogue between the Complainant and the Respondent and/ or the Principal.
Respondent	Any individual(s) whose actions are the subject of a Grievance.
the School	Refers to Loreto Secondary School, St Michael's.
School Day	A school day is a day on which the school is in operation.

Abbreviated Terms

BOM	Board of Management of Loreto Secondary School, St Michael's
JMB	Joint Managerial Body
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
WRC	Workplace Relations Commission

1. Preamble

The School recognises that, from time to time, staff may experience concerns, disagreements or disputes in the workplace. The School is committed to fostering a positive, respectful and supportive working environment, where issues are addressed fairly, transparently and in accordance with accepted best practice.

This Policy provides a structured framework for the raising and resolution of Grievances for all staff, including teachers, SNAs, administrative staff and ancillary staff. Although many Grievances may be resolved informally at an early stage, some require a more formal approach. This Policy therefore sets out formal procedures to ensure Grievances are addressed in a consistent, fair and timely manner.

This Policy is informed by the JMB Grievance Procedure¹ for voluntary secondary schools.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The Policy aims to:

- Facilitate the resolution of Grievances where they may arise.
- Create a culture where staff feel comfortable raising Grievances knowing that there will not be any repercussions.
- Support a positive working environment informed by the JMB Grievance Procedure.
- Provide clarity on escalation options, including referral to the BOM or external bodies for unresolved Grievances.

In addition, the Policy sets out a structured procedure, which includes four stages, with specific timescales at each stage, supporting transparency and consistency.

3. Scope of the Policy

This Policy applies to Grievances raised by all permanent, fixed-term and part-time staff employed by the School, including teachers, SNAs, administrative staff and ancillary staff, regardless of length of service.

This Policy does not cover Grievances raised relating to the following which are dealt with under separate policies:

- Recruitment processes
- Disciplinary issues
- Protected disclosures (whistleblowing)
- Pay or terms and conditions of employment

3.1 Examples of Grievances Covered

Grievances may arise in the following areas (note: this list is illustrative and not exhaustive):

- Allocation of work and assignment of duties
- Granting, or non-granting, of all forms of leave (e.g. annual leave, compassionate leave, study leave)
- Interpretation and application of school policies, procedures or agreements
- Access, or lack of access, to training and professional development opportunities

¹ See Appendix 2 of 'A Manual for Boards of Management of Catholic Voluntary Secondary Schools'
<https://www.jmb.ie/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=TAasz5eNOJY%3D&portalid=0&resourceView=1>

- Health and safety concerns
- Relationships with colleagues
- Organisational change or new working practices

3.2 Linked Policies

The following policies are related to this Policy:

- Dignity at Work Policy
- Child Protection/ Safeguarding Policy
- Protected Disclosures Policy
- Health & Safety Policy

4. Policy Statement and Objectives

The School is committed to promoting positive staff relations, wellbeing and morale. The School recognises that Grievances may arise and has procedures to facilitate early and fair resolution, aiming to restore positive working relationships quickly.

In implementing this Policy, the School:

- Handling all Grievances fairly, transparently and in a timely manner.
- Ensuring staff can raise Grievances without fear of reprisal.
- Supporting school leaders to follow consistent processes in line with JMB Guidance.
- Maintaining confidentiality throughout the Grievance process.
- Linking the Grievance process to related policies (listed above).
- Ensuring all policies comply with Irish equality legislation.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 All Staff

All Staff are required to comply with the provisions of this Policy and to raise concerns in a timely and appropriate manner, including, where relevant, discussing issues with peer colleagues, Deputy Principals or the Principal. It is anticipated that most Grievances will be Informal Grievances and will therefore be addressed and resolved informally. Where this is not possible, the matter will proceed through the Formal Grievance procedure.

5.2 Deputy Principals

Deputy Principals will address Grievances in adherence with the Grievance Procedure outlined in this Policy (see Section 6), in a consistent, timely and impartial manner and in accordance with JMB Guidance. They will ensure that this Policy and its procedures are applied fairly and correctly and will report matters to the Principal as required.

5.3 Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for the management and oversight of Grievances within the School. They provide leadership, guidance and direction in complex, sensitive or escalated cases and may undertake

any enquiries necessary to reach a fair and informed decision. They ensure that all Grievances are handled in a timely, fair and impartial manner, in accordance with this Policy, JMB Guidance and all relevant employment legislation and regulatory requirements. Where appropriate, matters may be referred or escalated to the BOM in accordance with this Policy.

5.4 Board of Management (BOM)

The BOM is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this Policy, ensuring that the Grievance procedures are applied consistently and effectively across the School. The BOM provides governance and accountability for the process, monitoring compliance with the Policy, relevant legislation and JMB Guidance and taking any necessary action to support fair and transparent outcomes.

6. Grievance Procedure

The following sections outline the step-by-step Grievance procedure for both Informal Grievances and Formal Grievances.

6.1 Informal Stage

- The goal ultimately is to resolve the majority of Grievances at this stage.
- In the Informal stage, the Complainant is encouraged to discuss concerns directly with the Respondent involved, where appropriate.
- If the Complainant does not feel comfortable raising the Grievance with the Respondent themselves, or they have raised the Grievance directly and it then remains unresolved, the escalation process then requires them to discuss the matter informally with the Deputy Principal or Principal.
- While all discussions are informal at this point, brief notes may be kept confidentially.

6.2 Formal Stage (Principal)

- Should the Grievance remain unresolved following the informal stage, the Complainant is required to submit the Grievance in writing to the Principal using the Grievance Procedure Template (see Appendix 1).
- The Principal will undertake a review and will meet with the Complainant within seven to ten School Days.
- The Complainant may be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague at this meeting.
- Following the meeting, the Principal will issue a written outcome to the Complainant within five School Days. This outcome will outline any corrective actions, where applicable.
- In cases where the Principal is the Respondent, Grievances should be submitted in writing to the Chairperson of the BOM again using the Grievance Procedure Template (see Appendix 1).

6.3 Formal Stage (Board of Management)

- If the Complainant remains dissatisfied with the Principal's decision, the Complainant may appeal in writing to the Chairperson of the BOM.
- The BOM may form a Board sub-committee and hold a hearing with relevant parties (i.e. Complainant and Respondent) where each side can present their case.
- Relevant parties may choose to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague in this hearing.

- The aim of the hearing is to resolve the Grievance by conciliation and if the Grievance is resolved the matter is concluded.
- If the BOM or Board sub-committee is unable to resolve the Grievance by conciliation, it shall issue a written decision to the Complainant and to any other party or parties concerned within five School Days of the hearing.

6.4 External Resolution

- If a Grievance remains unresolved following the completion of the Formal Stage, the Complainant may, where appropriate, refer the matter to external bodies, including:
 - o an independent mediator; or
 - o the WRC for further mediation, conciliation or adjudication.
- Any such referral is subject to the statutory time limits, eligibility criteria and procedures of the relevant external body. The Complainant is responsible for ensuring compliance with these requirements.
- The Complainant is encouraged to seek independent advice regarding external processes if needed.

7. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is of utmost importance to protect both the Complainant and the Respondent, to maintain the integrity of this Policy and to foster an environment in which staff feel safe to raise a Grievance.

- Grievances are handled sensitively and confidentially.
- Information shall only be shared if necessary and where the Complainant agrees.
- Any violation of confidentiality will be regarded as a serious matter and may be addressed under disciplinary procedures.

8. False or Malicious Complaints

- Grievances raised that are intentionally misleading or made in bad faith will not be tolerated.
- Such Grievances will be addressed via appropriate procedures, including disciplinary action.
- A Complainant will not be penalised for submitting a Grievance made in good faith, even where it is subsequently determined to be a misunderstanding.

9. Review/ Monitoring

The Policy will be reviewed every three years following its implementation and may be reviewed more frequently if deemed necessary.

Signed: _____

Chairperson of BOM

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Principal/Secretary to BOM

Date: _____

Appendix 1: Grievance Submission Template (Internal Use)

To: Principal / Chairperson of Board of Management

From: [Name of Staff Member]

Date: [Insert date]

Statement of Grievance:

[Clearly describe the nature of the Grievance, including relevant dates, persons involved and specific policy / procedure / term of employment]

Previous Action Taken:

[Outline informal steps taken]

Desired Outcome:

[State the resolution or outcome sought]

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Note: This document will be handled in accordance with the School's Grievance Policy and confidentiality requirements.