



**Roll number:** 64150F

**Patron:** The Board of Governors of Glenstal Abbey School

# Complaints Procedure

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## INTRODUCTION

The Board of Management of Glenstal Abbey School is committed to dealing effectively with any complaints that parents or guardians (or students who have reached the age of 18 years) may have about their experience in our school. As a seven-day boarding school, we take all concerns seriously and are constantly striving to improve the care and education we provide. The ethos of the school is based on three essential principles which should characterise a Benedictine school: Reverence, Respect and Responsibility. Informed by these three principles, the school's Code of Conduct declares that all students have the right to:

- be treated with courtesy, kindness and respect
- live and learn in a safe, supportive environment, free from emotional, physical and sexual abuse
- be valued for their denominational, cultural, physical or intellectual diversity
- expect that school rules are fair, consistently implemented and respect the rights of all
- express feelings and opinions openly and honestly in a respectful manner
- expect that the school will strive to help them as they grow physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually

These rights underpin not only the conduct we expect from our students; they also inform the practice of the adults who work in the school. The school recognises, however, that for various reasons, students' experiences can sometimes fall short of these and that parents will sometimes wish to make a complaint. Healing any harm done, reconciliation with the person affected, and learning lessons for the future are the goals of our approach to dealing with complaints. Just as St Benedict in his *Rule* requires of his communities, in Glenstal Abbey School, if we get something wrong, we will apologise and where possible try to put things right (*cf Rule Ch. 46*).

Sometimes, parents may have concerns about matters that are not actually decided by the school (*eg* decisions of the State Examinations Commission, Tusla, or the National Council for Special Education). In such cases, the school will advise parents of the appropriate channel for their complaint.

### ***Role of the Department of Education***

Under the Education Act 1998, legally, schools are managed by a Board of Management, on behalf of the school patrons or trustees. It is the Board of Management that employs the school's teachers and other staff. In Glenstal, the Head and Principal (hereafter referred to as the 'Head') manages the school on a day to day basis. As the Department of Education has no role either in the employment of staff in schools or in schools' day to day management, complaints about a school or its staff should be made directly to the school and not to the Department.

### ***Child Protection***

This policy does not apply to complaints in relation to actions or decisions by the school relating to child protection. All child protection and safeguarding practice in the school follows the Department of Education's [Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) (2017).

### ***Complaints relating to Teachers***

This policy does not apply to complaints in relation to teachers. In cases of complaints about a teacher, the [Complaints Procedure for Voluntary Secondary Schools with Boards of Management](#), agreed by the Joint Managerial Body and the teaching unions, must be followed.

### ***Please note:***

- For the purpose of this policy, the Head is the Complaints Officer
- Terms such as 'your child' and 'son' are to be understood as also referring to students in respect of whom the complainant is legal guardian or local educational guardian

## **MAKING A COMPLAINT**

### ***Introduction***

The exhortation to *listen* is at the very start of St Benedict's *Rule*. It implies that a spirit of attentiveness and openness should characterise the life and deeds of all Benedictine communities and institutions. Striving to be faithful to that spirit, Glenstal Abbey School is committed to listening openly and humbly when a parent or guardian (or a student who has reached the age of 18) makes a complaint. We want our school to be a healthy and happy community and recognise that this will sometimes require acknowledgment of failure, request for forgiveness and commitment to change.

There is no such thing as a trivial complaint and we will always seek to be a school which learns from mistakes and makes changes to how we operate so as to provide the highest standards of care and academic success for all our students. All complaints – whether made during a personal meeting or submitted in writing – will be taken seriously and responded to as constructively as possible. As a Benedictine boarding school, Glenstal Abbey School is a household and home where we seek to resolve faults, misunderstandings and disappointment through open dialogue and consultation. As St Benedict reminds those who are in charge of communities, 'Do everything with counsel, and you will not repent when you have done it' (*cf Rule Ch. 3*).

### **Pathway A – Informal conversation (in person, or by email or phone)**

Because consultation is a core value for the school, along with the more formal Parent-Teacher Meetings, we provide many informal opportunities for parents to visit the school and to have open and friendly dialogue with the adults involved in caring for their sons (*eg* refreshments after sports fixtures and after Mass on Sunday; informal meetings when boys are arriving or leaving the school etc) and we encourage parents to avail of these opportunities to raise any issues of concern. The staff member directly involved in the situation is the best person to approach in the first instance, and such informal encounters are an invaluable channel for addressing concerns and complaints. If visiting the school is not practical, or the issue is one of immediate concern, parents are encouraged to phone or email the relevant Housemaster, the Head of Boarding or the Head as soon as possible.

Whether the contact is personal or via phone/email, it is always healthier and easier to register concerns and complaints as promptly as possible, thus avoiding the unnecessary build-up of tension or frustration. The member of staff who receives a complaint will listen carefully, in a spirit of openness and cooperation, and will try to resolve the issue as promptly as possible. If there are any lessons to be learned from addressing the complaint, the staff member will draw them to the attention of the Head. If the member of staff cannot resolve the situation to the complainant's satisfaction, the complainant may choose to make a written complaint.

### **Pathway B – Written complaint**

#### ***Submitting a complaint***

A parent (or student who has reached the age of 18) who wishes to submit a written complaint must do so using the Complaint Form. The form is appended to this policy on the school website. Alternatively, copies of the form can be requested from the school office. Any relevant additional documentation or correspondence should be attached to the form. Please note that a parent may only make a complaint on behalf of his/her own son.

#### ***How the school will respond to you***

The school will formally acknowledge receipt of the Complaint Form within 5 working days and tell you how the matter will be dealt with. We are committed to dealing with all complaints in an open and honest way.

#### ***What we expect from you***

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. Similarly, we also hold that our staff have the same rights. We therefore expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us.

### **Investigation**

Initially, the Head will appoint a member of staff to investigate the complaint and get back to you. We will tell you who has been appointed to this role. We will set out to you our understanding of your complaint and ask you to confirm that we have got it right. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for. The extent of the investigation will depend on how complex the issues you have raised are. The person who is investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you are happy to accept this. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

If it is not possible to resolve the issue at this stage, the Head will appoint someone from outside the school to investigate. The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it is important that you tell us. We will let you know how long we expect this investigation to take and will give you regular updates every 20 working days on progress made.

### **Outcome**

At the end of the investigation, the Head will write to you by letter to inform you of the conclusions reached and how and why they were reached. If we find that the school got it wrong, we will tell you so and why it happened. If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things so as to avoid a reoccurrence of the issue.

The Board of Management and staff of Glenstal Abbey School are committed to addressing any shortcomings that are identified and putting them right. If the investigation identifies something that we need to put right, we will let you know when the changes we have promised have been made.

### **Ombudsman for Children**

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Ombudsman for Children. In accordance with the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002, the [Office of the Ombudsman for Children](http://www.oco.ie) provides an independent and impartial complaint handling service. The Ombudsman for Children can look into your complaint if you believe that you or your child have been treated unfairly or disadvantaged personally through some failure on our part. The Ombudsman for Children can investigate complaints provided the complainant has firstly and fully followed the school's complaints procedures. The key criterion for any intervention by the Ombudsman for Children is that the action complained of has or may have adversely affected the child.

More information about the Ombudsman for Children can be obtained on [www.oco.ie](http://www.oco.ie) or by contacting them at:

*Email*                    [oco@oco.ie](mailto:oco@oco.ie)  
*Address* Ombudsman for Children's Office  
                                 Millennium House  
                                 52-56 Great Strand Street  
                                 Dublin 1, D01 F5P8  
*Phone*                    01 865 6800  
*Freephone*              1800 20 20 40

### **Learning lessons**

We take all complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we have made. The Board of Management of Glenstal Abbey School will receive and consider a report on complaints received at least once each term.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 18 May 2022.

Signed:                    *David S. Leahy*  
                                 Chairperson of Board of Management

*Marius Carney*  
Head & Principal

## COMPLAINT FORM FOR ISSUES RELATING TO BOARDING

### Section A – Your Details

Name of person making complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian of: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section B –Your Complaint *(\*Please continue on additional sheets if necessary)*

What do you think the school did wrong, or failed to do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe how your son has been affected: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Have you already put your concern to the relevant boarding staff in an attempt to resolve the situation? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so and what the outcome was.**

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**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

- *If you have any documents to support your concern/complaint, please attach them with this form*
- *Please forward the completed form to the Head, Mr Marius Carney, who is the school's designated Complaints Officer*