



# Powerstown Educate Together National School

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*Powerstown Educate Together National School*

## Staff Relations

*This policy has been formulated by Powerstown ETNS to promote positive relations between school and home.*

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### Introductory statement

This policy was developed by the staff of Powerstown Educate Together National School in consultation with the Board of Management and INTO recommendations. Its purpose is to provide information and guidelines to teachers on the procedure to address staff difficulties in Powerstown Educate Together. The staff strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other in order to promote a positive working environment.

## Procedure to Address Staff Difficulties

### Stage 1: Informally address matters between the parties

It is open to an individual teacher/group of teachers/entire staff to raise the matter of internal working relations in the school, particularly, where staff relations difficulties exist.

For the purpose of this procedure the teacher(s) who raises the matter shall be termed party A. Party A should raise the matter with the teacher(s) it considers to be the source of the difficulty or who is contributing to the difficulty and this may include the principal teacher, ie for the purpose of this procedure, party B.

The manner by which party A decides to raise matters, will to a large extent depend on the issues identified by the party, previous experience and the existing procedure in the school for raising matters. In general, the following steps should be taken:

Party A should identify the areas where staff relations difficulties exist or if applicable, where relations can be improved; party A should raise matters at the earliest opportunity directly with party B; party B should make every effort to respond in a constructive manner to the issues raised by party A; the onus is now on both parties to engage constructively to sort out matters and it would be expected that the parties would be prepared to reach solutions and if appropriate, move their position in order to resolve matters at the earliest opportunity; both parties should agree realistic time frames which should not be later than 20 school days by which time a framework for resolution of issues should be agreed; the outcome of the discussions should be recorded by the parties in a mutually agreeable manner; by agreement the 20 school day period may be extended and the parties should take specific note of the new time frames.

Please note that if resolution is not achieved and the principal teacher is one of the parties at stage 1, then, where a party wishes to continue, the procedure should, after completion of stage 1, move directly to stage 3 or stage 4.

## Stage 2: Role of the Principal teacher

Where it has not been possible to resolve matters informally and directly between the parties and where the principal teacher is not a party to the conflict, the principal should be consulted by both parties as follows:

- the principal teacher should be briefed by each party on the discussions which have occurred at the informal stage;
- as part of effective leadership, the principal teacher has a role in promoting positive working relations and accordingly should hear the parties and seek to mediate and resolve the staff relations difficulty;
- the principal should act in a fair and impartial manner and may exercise judgement and make decisions which he/she considers necessary to resolve matters;
- the onus is on both parties, facilitated by the principal teacher, to engage constructively to resolve matters and it is expected that the parties would be prepared to reach solutions and, if appropriate, move their position in order to resolve matters at the earliest opportunity;
- where the principal teacher deems it prudent and appropriate, he/she may raise the matter at a staff meeting and seek to initiate a framework through full staff dialogue, to resolve matters. In these circumstances, it is recommended, that where possible, a neutral member of staff or a member of staff acceptable to both parties, should be selected to chair the staff meeting;
- the outcome of the discussions should be recorded by the parties including the principal teacher in a mutually agreeable manner;
- 20 school days are provided to resolve matters at stage 2 and the parties should note the time frames which should only be extended by agreement.

Please note that where resolution is not achieved at stages 1 or 2, it is open to the parties to move to stage 3 or to go directly to stage 4.

### Stage 3: External intervention

Where resolution has not been achieved at either stage 1 or stage 2, the parties and/or the principal teacher may request the board of management to appoint a mediator, agreeable to the parties.

Prior to entering a mediation process, each of the members of staff concerned, will be required to supply the following background information for the attention of the mediator only:

- a written account of the issues involved;
- a written account of the initiatives taken to date to resolve matters, detailing any progress made, together with a general outline of the sequence of dates. Where the principal teacher has been involved at stage 2, he/she should also supply an account;
- a list of the outstanding issues and the resolutions sought by the parties; and
- a written and signed undertaking, to the effect, that he/she:
  - will constructively participate in the mediation process;
  - will be flexible in order to achieve resolution; and
  - will abide by and act on the recommendations of the mediator.

The mediator shall:

- review all of the documentation;
- arrange to meet with the parties;
- decide on whether it is possible to achieve a framework for resolution in light of the attitudes of the parties; and
- where the mediator decides to proceed, he/she shall, following the mediation process, draft a conclusion.

The conclusion of the mediator shall solely state whether mediation has either achieved or failed to achieve a framework for resolution. The conclusion of the mediator shall be available to the parties and to the board of management.

In addition, if a framework for resolution is agreed between the parties, then a copy of same may be appended to the conclusion.

As a rule, the mediator shall complete his/her work within 20 school days.

A joint INTO/management panel of mediators will be established for the purpose of facilitating independent mediation.

Please note that any expenses involved at this stage will be shared by the parties, ie INTO and the relevant management body, provided that prior sanction for same has been obtained from those parties.

#### **Stage 4: Formally address matters with the Board of Management**

Where it has not been possible to agree a framework for resolution at previous stages, the matter should be referred, by the parties, to the board of management for investigation. The referral should be in writing. In addition, the conclusion of the mediator may indicate that the matter should be referred to the board of management and in this regard, the mediator's conclusion may itself constitute a referral. Once a board of management has received a written referral to investigate a staff relations difficulty, it should, generally, proceed as follows:

- the board may enquire into the background of the difficulties including obtaining details on the sequence of initiatives taken at previous stages;
- the board or the chairperson of the board may meet the teachers individually or collectively and may also request written submissions from the parties, having regard also to the principles of due process;
- the board may request the principal teacher to furnish a written submission;
- the board may afford the parties an opportunity to present their case orally at a board meeting, in each other's presence;
- following oral presentations the board of management may designate the chairperson to meet with the parties again, separately or jointly, if further clarification is required or to work towards resolution;
- the board of management may convene a number of meetings in order to achieve resolution; the board of management shall act in a fair and impartial manner in order to achieve resolution;
- the board is entitled to reach conclusions and to request the parties to agree a framework for resolution in which the parties will fully and constructively participate;

- where the parties fail to voluntarily agree a framework for resolution, following a request by the board of management, the board itself is entitled to decide on an appropriate framework for resolution and may, if considered necessary, direct the parties to participate in same;
- the board of management should complete its investigation within 20 school days of receipt of the written referral;
- the steps taken at stage 4 should be recorded, reviewed and monitored and the record should be available to the parties.

## **Review**

This policy will updated if/when new policies and or procedures are released by the Irish National Teacher's Organisation (INTO)

## **Ratification:**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in September 2012.