

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

PURPOSE

This policy and procedure aims to reassure parents and others with an interest in the school that:

- any complaint against the school will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution; and
- the school recognises that a willingness to listen to questions and criticism and to respond positively, can lead to improvements in school practices and provision for pupils.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- Complainants may be anyone e.g. parents, guardians, grandparents, neighbours of the school or anyone with an interest in the work of the school. However, it is expected that it will be mainly parents or guardians who will make use of this procedure. The term 'parent' is therefore used throughout the procedure as a generic term, but the procedure also applies in relation to any other type of complainant.
- Complaints may be made by telephone, e-mail, in person or be written.
- A complaint is defined as a clear statement of dissatisfaction about any specified aspect of the school's work. This procedure deals with specified day-to-day complaints against the management and/or operation of the school.

GENERAL

- Records of all conversations and meetings with parents to resolve formal complaints will be kept.
- Each Head Teacher (and/or Assistant Head/Principal) to keep a file of hard copies of Formal School Complaint Forms (Appendix 1)
- There may be rare occasions when, despite all the stages of the procedure having been followed, a parent remains dissatisfied. If the parent seeks to re-open the same issue, the school reserves the right to inform him/her in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed.

INFORMAL STAGE OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- On occasions, a parent may raise a concern directly with school staff without any formality. At this stage, it may be unclear whether the parent is making a complaint, seeking information or has misunderstood a situation. In any event, the school aims to resolve the concern at this point in a speedy and effective way.
- However, if the concern is not resolved immediately and a complaint is confirmed by the parent, the opportunity to discuss the matter with an appropriate member of staff will be given e.g. Deputy Head, Assistant Head, Key Stage Coordinator or Head of Subject. In the case of complaint against the Head Teacher or Deputy Head, this stage will always be heard directly by the Head Teacher her/himself.
- The member of staff will discuss the issue with the parent and those involved in school, with the aim of resolving the complaint as soon as possible. The parent will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and what action, if any, the school proposes to take.
- If the informal process has been exhausted and no satisfactory solution has been found, the parent will be asked by the member of staff dealing with the complaint whether (s)he wishes the complaint to be considered formally at stage one of this procedure.

- If wishing to proceed with the complaint, the parent will be invited to put the complaint in writing to the Head Teacher using the Formal School Complaint Form attached to this policy as Appendix 1. The form should be sent to the Head Teacher within **ten school days**.
- If a Formal School Complaint Form is not submitted within 10 school days the school will assume that the complaint has been withdrawn.

FORMAL STAGES OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage 1: Referral for further investigation

- Where the complaint has been addressed by the Head Teacher at the Informal Stage, this stage will be heard by the Principal. Where another staff member has addressed the complaint at the Informal Stage, this stage will be heard by the Head Teacher.
- The Principal or Head Teacher will acknowledge the written complaint within **two school days** of receipt and provide an opportunity to meet the parent to discuss the complaint.
- The Principal or Head Teacher will investigate the complaint and a written response will normally be made within **five school days** of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date.
- The written response will include full reasons for the conclusions reached by the Principal or Head Teacher and what action, if any, the school proposes to take to resolve the matter.
- If the parent still remains dissatisfied, (s)he will be advised that, in order to progress the complaint further at Stage 2, (s)he must notify the School Management Board in writing **within five school days**.
- The SMB will then ensure that the parent is offered the opportunity of taking the complaint to the Complaints Panel at Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2: Review by a Complaints Panel

- Complaints will only rarely reach this level. However, when the need arises, a Complaints Panel will consider complaints at this stage.
- A written acknowledgement of the complaint and the request for it to be heard at Stage 2 of the Procedure will be sent to the parent by the SMB within **two school days**.
- The letter will inform the parent that the complaint will be heard by a Complaints Panel within **five school days** of receiving the complaint. It will also inform the parent of the right to submit any further documents other than the complaint form and that these must be made available to the SMB within **three school days** of receipt of the acknowledgement letter. The complainant does not have the right to call witnesses to the meeting, although the parent may be accompanied by a companion of her/his choice.
- The SMB will send a copy of the letter of acknowledgement of the complaint to the Principal and/or Head Teacher and request a written report in response to the complaint within **three school days** of receipt of the letter.
- The SMB will then convene a Complaints Panel meeting, having consulted with all parties on convenient times. The date, time and venue for the meeting will then be confirmed at least **five school days** in advance.
- The names of all parties to attend the meeting and all relevant documents to be referred to at the meeting will also be provided by the Chair of the Complaints Panel to: the parent; the Principal and/or Head Teacher; and each panel member. This will be provided as soon as possible and, in any event, at least **three school days** prior to the meeting.

- The meeting will be held following the procedures for hearing a complaint detailed in Appendix 3
- A written decision will be sent to the parent and the Principal and/or Head Teacher by the Chair of the Complaints Panel within **three school days** of the hearing.
- The letter will explain that the decision of the Complaints Panel is final and that there is no subsequent appeal process

Appendix 1

FORMAL SCHOOL COMPLAINT FORM

To whom or what does the issue relate? -----

Complainant -----

Contact details (including mobile telephone number) -----

Details of Complaint:

(Please be as specific as possible e.g. giving dates, who was involved and where etc.)

Please attach a continuation sheet and additional information if you wish

What would you like to see done to resolve your complaint and bring the matter to an acceptable closure for yourself and the school?

Appendix 2

Composition of the Complaints Panel

- The Complaints Panel should consist of three members of the school. A Chair should also be appointed by the panel.
- No member of the Complaints Panel should have had prior involvement with the complaint.
- Normally, the Principal should be one member of the panel. If the Principal was involved at an earlier stage in the procedure he should not be included as a member of the panel. In this case an alternative member of the School Management Board should be a member of the panel.
- The second and third member of the panel should be a Head Teacher and Deputy Head from a different phase within the school
- It is not considered appropriate for the Head Teacher of the phase from which the complaint originated to be a member of the panel. The role of the Head Teacher would be to attend the panel hearing to give evidence

Appendix 3

Complaints Panel - Procedures for Hearing the Complaint

Introduction

- The aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve a reconciliation between the school and the parent
- The Chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.
- Although the meeting will follow the structured order below, given potential sensitivities and anxieties, the Chair will endeavour to ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible and that all parties are put at their ease.

Order of Meeting

1. The Chair welcomes the parent and his/her companion
2. The Chair explains the purpose of the meeting, the procedure, and that all written evidence has been made available to all parties.
3. The parent explains the complaint
4. The panel may question the parent
5. The parent and companion retire from the meeting
6. The Chair welcomes the Head Teacher (or the Principal where the complaint has been addressed by the Principal at Stage 2).
7. The Chair explains the purpose of the meeting, the procedure, and that all written evidence has been made available to all parties.
8. The Head Teacher or Principal presents a response to the complaint, including action taken to address the complaint at earlier stages of the procedure.
9. The panel may question the Head Teacher or Principal.
10. The Head Teacher or Principal leaves from the meeting.
11. The parent, together with his/her companion, is invited back into the room to make a final statement, and then leaves again.
12. The Head Teacher or the Principal is invited back into the room to make a final statement, and then leaves again.
13. The Panel considers the complaint and reaches a majority decision. The panel also decides what action (if any) to take to resolve the complaint and, if appropriate, recommends changes to ensure similar complaints are not made in future.
14. When a decision has been made, the Chair recalls the parent, then the Head Teacher and each is informed of the outcome and any action to be taken.
15. The decision of the Complaints Panel constitutes a judgement and there is no subsequent appeal procedure
16. All outcomes are confirmed in writing to both parties within three days

British Vietnamese International School

Complaints Procedure Flowchart

