



Appeals, Concerns and Complaints Policy

Date of issue	13 th September 2023
Authors	Ian Ward
Version	1
Policy Type	Academic
Circulation	All staff
Date Authorised	September 2023
Checked by	Principal
Review Date	August 2024

Rationale

At Emirates International School Meadows (EISM), we believe that the concerns of parents/ guardians or third parties about the activities or actions of the school should be resolved swiftly and, if parents do have a concern or complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with a set procedure.

This procedure differentiates between a concern that can be resolved informally or a formal complaint that requires further investigation. The following procedures are flexible enough to be performed during a term and can be adapted, as appropriate, to individual cases and their circumstances.

The Director or Assistant Director of Schools who may be approached with a complaint will usually refer the matter to the Principal, unless the complaint is about the response of the Principal to a previous complaint, which in this case will be referred to them.

Separate procedures apply in the event that a Child Protection issue arises or if the Principal expels a student.

Should parents/ guardians have any concerns about the safety of their child, notify immediately the person you believe is best placed to take urgent action and confirm this in writing to the Principal.

A complaint is defined as - any issue of concern or difficulty raised by a parent.

An appeal is defined as - the process by which a complaint has been heard, judged by the school and a decision made that does not provide a satisfactory outcome in the opinion of the complainant.

Underpinning Complaints Philosophy

EISM is committed to providing parents/ guardians with a voice and welcome their feedback. EISM will take a customer service approach to complaints and aims to resolve parents' concerns and complaints as swiftly and effectively as possible to avoid escalation and recurrence. It is hoped that any worries or complaints can be dealt with informally, but if not, the school has a formal complaints procedure.

Formal complaints are extremely rare, reflecting the positive relationships between students, parents and the school which enable matters to be resolved informally.

During INSET and throughout the academic year, Teachers and Leaders are advised of the professional expectation to be proactive, preventative and accommodating in resolving parent concerns.

A more formal procedure for parent complaints is outlined and takes into consideration requirements advised by local regulatory authorities. All stages of the complaint's procedure will be investigatory rather than adversarial.

Purpose of the Policy

Outline the expectations, general procedures for managing parent complaints in a proactive and preventative manner.

Outlines the procedures for documenting complaints providing an overview in an effort to prevent recurring conditions, and to track individual matters to ensure swift effective resolution to retain families at EISM.

Any complaint which requires further action beyond listening, must be escalated and recorded, along with resolution/actions taken and dates (this can also be recorded via email communication). In more serious instances, a timeline will need to be produced. Parents are advised that anonymous complaints will not be investigated unless under truly exceptional circumstances, such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, which may involve external agencies.

Responsibilities

The Principal is responsible for ensuring the Appeals, Concerns and Complaints Policy and procedures are implemented in school and for ensuring any complaint is reasonably investigated.

School staff are responsible for implementing the Complaints Policy and for reporting any complaint to their direct line manager or Senior Leadership Team if relevant.

Procedures

Stage 1: Informal Procedure

It is hoped that almost all complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents/guardians have concerns, it is expected they speak to their child's Class/ Subject teacher/Form Tutor and or Head of Year. A matter raised orally may not necessarily be acknowledged by the school in writing.

- Written notification of a concern will be acknowledged in writing within 24 hours during term time and as soon as practicable at the weekend or in the holidays. In many cases, the matter will be resolved promptly by this means to the parents' satisfaction.
- It is expected that in almost all cases this will lead to an agreement or understanding being reached between the various parties.
- During the informal procedure, the parent's concern/ complaint may be referred to a number of staff before a suitable resolution is reached, for example:
 - Class/ Subject teacher/Form
 - Head of Year
 - Head of Pastoral
 - Deputy Head of School (PS/HS)
- The relevant member of staff (person who resolved the complaint) will record of the concern/ complaint, and any responses, and the date on which they were received. If the concern of complaint is escalated further, the member of staff will be expected to produce a timeline of how the concern/ complaint was dealt with and by whom.
- If the complaint is against a specific member of staff and parents believe that the complaint is of a serious nature, they may make the complaint directly to the relevant Head of School or Principal, this will be escalated to stage 2 without the need for stage 1.
- Where the first contact is directly to the Principal or Director/ Assistant Director of Schools, this will be initially treated as an informal complaint and will be referred back to the relevant Head of School.
- If, after the meeting, there is no satisfactory resolution, parents are advised to proceed to Stage 2 of the procedure. (see appendix 1).

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head of Primary School or High School or the Principal.

- The relevant Head of School will inform the Principal of any formal complaints received within 24 hours of their receipt.
- The relevant Head of School will meet the parents concerned, within two working days of receiving the written complaint, to discuss the matter (subject to the parent's availability). If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. If the complaint is made against a specific member of staff, the Head of School will have the right to decide whether the member of staff's presence will be appropriate at this stage.
- The Head of School may appoint an Investigating Officer to investigate the matter and will provide a response within 2 working days. The investigation report will confirm if they believe there is a case to answer. This will be communicated to all interested parties.
- The School will keep records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of the procedure, which will be considered by the Principal.

Stage 3: Principal's Review

If parents wish to proceed to Stage 3 of the procedure, they will be referred to the Principal for review.

- The Principal will acknowledge the complaint within 24 hours of the receipt and reply within a further 2 working days.
- The Principal's review will consist of the following:

- A review to ensure that the correct processes have been followed.
- A review of the written records of meetings and interviews and of any other evidence.
- A review of the decision made by the relevant Head of School.
- The Principal will meet with the parents to convey their decision.

Stage Four: Final Appeal to the Complaint and Appeal Panel

If parents/third parties are dissatisfied with the decision made by the Principal, they should write to the Director of Schools within 7 days of the date they have been notified of the decision, so that the matter can be referred to the Complaint and Appeal Panel for consideration.

Parents/third parties should ensure that a copy of all relevant documents and their full contact details accompany their letter, which should also state the outcome desired and all the grounds of the complaint. The Complaint and Appeal Panel will only be convened if Stages One to Three of this procedure have been followed.

The Director of Schools PA shall acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as reasonably practicable but the Panel will not normally sit during half terms or school holidays.

The Panel will consist of at least three persons not having detailed knowledge of or being directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by Governance. The hearing will be chaired by one member of the Panel (chosen by themselves) and will be conducted in an informal manner. The Director of Schools PA will be asked to take a handwritten minute of the proceedings.

The parents/third party will be sent written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing together with brief details of the panel members. Parents/guardians will be asked to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person, this may be a relative or friend. Legal representation is not normally considered appropriate.

If parents wish to bring a legally qualified person to act in their professional capacity, the parents should provide the school with at least 7 days' notice.

After consideration of all matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel will reach a decision (unless there is an agreed position) and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 14 working days of the appeal hearing. The Director of Schools PA will write to the parents/ third party, informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings and recommendations, if any, will be sent in writing to the parents/third party, the Principal, the Governors and where relevant, the person complained of.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential.

The Complaint and Appeal Panel will be made up of:

- Director of Schools.
- Assistant Director of Schools parent, who does not know the complainant or student.
- Group Business Manager.
- A School Leadership representative (normally the Principal, however the Principal will not take part in making the final decision).

If, having followed the complaints procedure above a satisfactory solution has still not been found, the parent has the right thereafter to refer to the matter by KHDA by contacting the Compliance and Resolution Commission.

Complaints about members of the Senior Leadership Team and the Principal

If a complaint is received about a member of the Senior Leadership Team, it is hoped that the complaint can be resolved informally. If a complainant believes this would not be possible, the complaint should be sent directly to the Principal.

If a complaint is received about the Principal, it is hoped that the complaint can be resolved informally. If a complainant believes this would not be possible, the complaint should be sent directly to The Director or Assistant Director of Schools.

Register of Complaints

A record of all written complaints, and whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to an investigation, will be kept in confidence by the relevant Head of School.

A register (stage 3 or complaints escalated to the Director or Assistant Director of Schools) will be held centrally by the Director's PA.

Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and in confidence. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential.

Unreasonable complaints and serial and persistent complainants

EISM is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with school.

However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will act to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

EISM defines serial and unreasonable complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints.'

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaint's procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- Maliciously.
- Aggressively.
- Using threats, intimidation or violence.
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language.
- Knowing it to be false.

- Using falsified information.
- Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Under no circumstances should a complainant be marked as 'serial' for exercising their right to refer their complaint to the Director of Schools and or KHDA, regardless of which stage the complaint has reached.

Complainants should limit the number of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Principal, Director or Assistant Director of School's will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' judgement.

If the behaviour continues the Principal will write to the complainant explaining that his/her behaviour is unreasonable and asking him/her to change it. For complainants who excessively contact EISM causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the KHDA and or police informed. This may include banning an individual from EISM.

Complaint Campaigns

In the rare event that EISM receives a large volume of complaints all based on the same subject, from complainants unconnected with the school, we will either send a template response to all complainants or publish a single response on the school's website.

Access to the School Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public (including parents) has no automatic right of entry.

Governors have a responsibility to protect the wellbeing of students and staff and will therefore act to ensure that schools remain a safe place.

If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, EISM can ask him/her to leave the school premises. In serious cases, the Principal or Director/ Assistant Director of School's can notify them in writing that their implied permission to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. Schools should always give the parent the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to remove access in writing.

The decision to remove access should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent should be notified in writing, explaining how long the removal of access will be in place. Anyone wishing to complain about having access removed can do so, by letter or email, to the Principal.

Links to other policies

Admissions

Scholarship

Assessment

Behaviour

Learning and Teaching

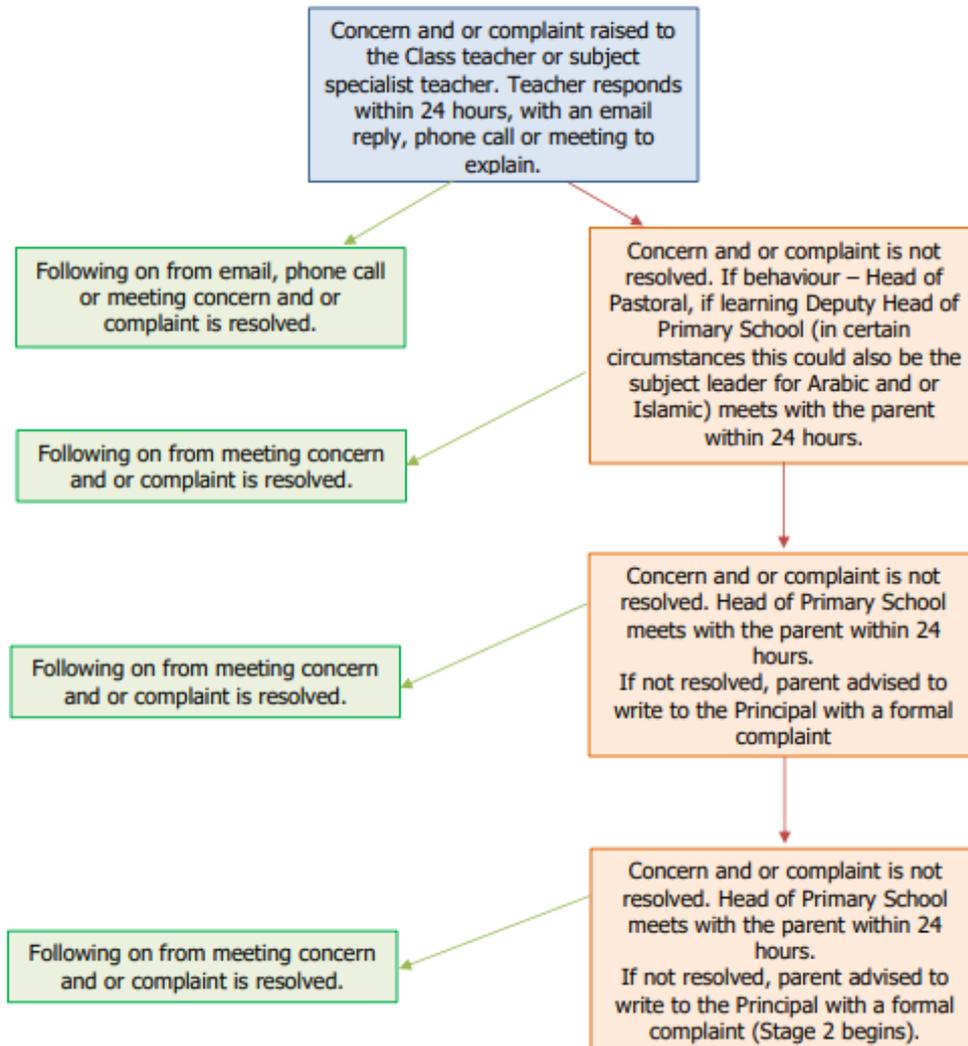
Inclusion

Appendix 1



مدرسة الإمارات الدولية - ميدوز Emirates International School - Meadows

Procedure for dealing with Stage 1 – Primary School Informal Complaints





مدرسة الإمارات الدولية - ميدوز
Emirates International School - Meadows

Procedure for dealing with Stage 1 – High School Informal Complaints

