

Policy for Dealing with Parental Complaints

Aims

RBS has an open door policy for complaints and concerns raised by parents. This corresponds to all concerns and complaints made: be it over the phone, in person or in writing. Reach seeks to resolve all issues promptly, courteously and with fairness. The rights and responsibilities of both parties should be acknowledged and balanced. It is expected that each party listens to the other, and understands points of common ground. An agreement will then be sought which is in accordance with the school's policies and procedures and in keeping with the U.A.E. law. In instances where a situation is non-negotiable parents will be given valid reasons to justify this. Most situations can be resolved internally and in an amicable way. However, if a situation cannot be resolved internally, then outside agencies can be contacted as a last resort for further support and assistance by either party.

Types of concerns and complaints. The most common relate to;

1. the management of an incident between students at a school,
2. the educational progress or holistic development of their child,
3. the development and implementation of school and general education policy.

Definitions

A '**concern**' is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation.

A '**complaint**' is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

Methods of raising a complaint/concern.

- Usually via email or Class Dojo. All written messages will be responded to in writing either by the class teacher, or a member of the management team, if the teacher is unable to resolve it alone. The staff member dealing with the issue will acknowledge the message to confirm they've read it, and a resolution or clarification will be provided to parents.
- On occasions where the note warrants a phone call, a written response back to the parents will also follow via the school communication channels. This note will confirm what was discussed and agreed during that phone call and if needs be, an appointment will be scheduled to discuss the issue further. E.g. *'In regards to our conversation today...'*
- We ask parents to always contact the teacher first for a resolution, and if the issue is not settled satisfactorily, then they can approach the middle leaders or the Heads of School. Under certain circumstances, for example, if the issue is very serious, then a parent can directly contact the SLT without first going via the teacher.
- We ask that parents contact the school to arrange an appointment with the teacher during their non-contact hours with at least **24 hours'** notice so that the teacher has time to prepare. The same is for middle leaders. Staff members should not be met by parents before or after school as staff are safeguarding children.

Channels to go through

- **Teachers:** usually best placed to resolve concerns and complaints relating to student learning and specific student incidents in the teacher's class or group.
- **Year Leaders or Heads of Department:** provide support when students from other classes are involved.
- **Heads of School:** usually best placed to resolve concerns and complaints relating to staff members, the curriculum or complex student issues.
- **Vice Principal or Principal:** usually best placed to resolve concerns and complaints relating to school policy, school management, staff members or complex student issues.

Confidentiality

Parental complaints or concerns will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of the complaint or concern will be limited to the Head of School (and Vice Principal / Principal if appropriate) and those directly involved. It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents will not rebound adversely on their children in any way.

We cannot however, entirely rule out the need to make relevant third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police or ADEK. The parent would be informed, whether this was before or after referring the matter to external bodies would be upon the discretion of the Principal.

Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints will not be pursued.

Methods of raising a complaint/concern

- Parents can contact the Parent Relations Executive to make an appointment, and we seek to be as accommodating as possible so that issues get resolved promptly. If we are unable to see a parent that day, we will schedule an appointment at the earliest convenience for both parties.
- Letters of complaint or concern are kept in the child's school file, and are dealt with by the management team.
- Not all complaints or concerns are written down formally, unless it a) is very serious b) is a recurring problem or c) fails to be resolved because the parent is dissatisfied with the action taken by the school. In these incidences the written notes are kept in the child's file and would be taken by the management team only. The following information will be stated; 1) the name of the complainant, 2) the date the complaint was made, 3) brief description of complaint or concern made, 4) and the outcome or action taken, finally 5) who dealt with the issue.

Code of conduct for those involved in discussing the issue;

- To behave in a civilized manner; without need for raised voices or accusations,
- To respect each other with dignity and fairness,
- To value each other's views and to listen attentively and with empathy,
- Not to be personally insulting: complaints ought to address behaviors and actions not the character of the person themselves, this will seek to avoid the 'blame cycle,'
- Discrimination or other forms of harassment (such as bullying, violence and threatening behavior) are unacceptable.
- Should the meeting become heated, aggressive or unproductive the meeting will be cancelled and rescheduled at a later date, allowing time for reflection and a cooling off period. In such events, the school will keep a **written record** of what happened.

School Principal determines appropriate complaint procedure

After due consideration of the issues raised by the complainant the school Principal is to determine the most appropriate way to address a concern or complaint, either by:

- using the school's general concerns and complaints procedures, or
- as outlined under legislated and other complaints processes.

Complaint resolved

A complaint is considered to be resolved when the complainant and school, (or outside agency such as ADEK/ISP) agree on an appropriate response or remedy. Possible responses and remedies include:

- an explanation
- an acknowledgement of each other's perspective and agreement on ways to manage differences
- an apology or expression of regret
- an admission of fault
- a change of decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- agreement on what constitutes acceptable behavior
- an undertaking that unacceptable behavior will change
- the waiving of debt related to school fees and payments
- a refund of parent payments
- the provision of counselling or other support.

Remedies should be implemented as soon as possible.

Complaint dismissed

A complaint can only be dismissed:

- after it has been investigated,
- if an investigation has determined that the complaint cannot be substantiated.

If a complaint is dismissed the parent will be informed in writing of the decision with justifications given. A copy will also be kept in the child's file at school.

Complaint unresolved

A complaint is considered to be unresolved if the complainant does not agree on a course of action and/or a remedy, or if the remedy cannot be implemented. In such cases, the school will contact ADEK/ISP to assist in resolving the complaint. It may not always be possible to fully resolve all complaints to the complainant's satisfaction. This could happen if the complainant has unrealistic expectations about the outcome of their complaint, or if the school or ADEK's policies or regulations are contrary to their views. Where complex cases arise the school will contact appropriate bodies.

Unreasonable complainant conduct

Unreasonable complainant conduct is behavior that:

- is clearly and significantly outside the expectations of confidentiality, cooperation, courtesy and respect, is persistent, demanding, uncooperative,
- calls for staff resources and time unjustified by the nature or significance of the complaint,
- is vexatious (that is, an action or complaint that is brought without merit, often to cause annoyance to another person), or at worse to seek retribution,
- is argumentative or unreasonable e.g. oriented towards conflict; either verbally or physically,

- If a complainant is deemed by the Principal as being unreasonable, or if the situation is escalating or becoming non-productive and cyclical, then the meeting will be immediately suspended, allowing both parties time for reflection. The parent will be asked to put their complaints down in writing and the school will likewise write a report on what happened, and another meeting will be scheduled within a period of 20 working days' maximum. These notes will be kept in the child's school file.
- On occasions where the complainant becomes aggressive, confrontational, threatening, abusive and does not calm down upon the request of the Principal, then they will be escorted off of the property by the security guards, or if need be by the police. We seek to avoid such escalated situations by remaining assertive and professional. Parents will then be sent an official letter from the school within **24 hours**, informing them that their conduct is unacceptable. A plan of action will be implemented by the school for dealing with them in the future, such as asking them only to address complaints in writing, or asking them not to come onto school property in the future as their actions are dangerous or unpredictable. All letters sent to parents will be kept in the child's school file and the manager dealing with the issue will write a report on what happened.

Communicating and monitoring the parent complaints policy

All parents are informed at the start of the year, in writing, about the channels they are to take if they have a complaint or concern. They know that teachers cannot be asked questions at the start or end of the day because they must supervise their classes. They are aware of calling in advance to arrange a meeting in the non-contact time. Parents are aware that if they are dissatisfied with the decision taken internally, then ADEK and the Ministry of Education are at their disposal.

Staff likewise are informed at the start of each year about how and when to deal with parents. If they feel intimidated or threatened by a parent they can call for assistance from the SLT, or arrange to have them present during a scheduled meeting.

The school's values

The school's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- building relationships between students, parents and staff
- providing a safe working environment for staff.

Click [Here](#) to view the "Parent Complaint Form".