

## **Complaints Procedures for Parents at PACE British School, Sharjah**

We welcome suggestions and comments from parents and take any complaints and concerns that they may raise very seriously. We encourage parents to bring these to our attention as early as possible so that we have the opportunity to rectify a problem or explain the school's position before a concern becomes more serious. A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction, to which we will respond amicably.

All staff endeavour to listen to what parents and stakeholders are saying and to work in partnership to resolve any problems or concerns. The school recognises that a student's education will be enhanced by the wholehearted support of parents and appropriate accessibility to its staffing body, Middle and Senior Leadership Team.

Many worries or concerns can be managed without the need for formal procedures, providing that the concern is taken seriously and addressed at an early stage. In many cases, the class teacher will receive the first approach and the issue is resolved immediately. However, formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue remain unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Our school aims to be fair, open, and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding, and in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

It is inevitable in any institution that there are occasions when parents or other stakeholders are dissatisfied with the service provided.

This Policy advises all persons on how to direct a complaint and the potential escalation procedures around this.

We will ensure that:

- Parents who wish to make a complaint know how to do so.
- We respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way.
- Parents realise that we will listen and take all complaints seriously.
- We take appropriate action where necessary.

### **How should I complain?**

Parents who have a concern or complaint, should normally raise these in the first instance with their child's class teacher or form tutor by letter, email, telephone or by verbally requesting a meeting.

If the parent is not satisfied with the response of the class teacher or form tutor or feel that the matter is sufficiently sensitive or serious, they should contact the Head of Year who will then be able to liaise with relevant staff, put the parent in contact with the appropriate member of the Senior Management Team or refer the parent directly to the Head of School.

Parents may feel that they should contact the Head of School directly, especially on a matter of great importance or sensitivity, however, matters usually have to be referred back to the Head of Year, therefore it is best to seek his/her advice in the first instance.

Parents can also write directly to the Principal if the matter is of serious concern, although the issue would still have to be referred back to and discussed with appropriate members of the School Management Team.

### **What will happen next?**

If a parent raises an issue face to face or by telephone or email, it will hopefully be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to their satisfaction. If the parent has made a complaint or suggestion in writing, they will receive a response within two working days, acknowledging their letter and explaining how they/the school propose to proceed. In many circumstances, the person contacted may need to discuss the issue with one or more colleagues and consider further before a response can be made. The parent will be given a date by which they will receive a further response.

If a detailed explanation of the issue is needed, a letter or report will be sent to the parent as quickly as possible, informing them of the outcome of their complaint and will explain any action taken or proposed. Alternatively, the parent may be invited to a meeting at the school.

The Principal's PA will keep a written record of all significant parental complaints and their outcome.

All complaints should be dealt with within 7 working days.

Where a complaint is considered more complex and requires additional time for investigation, the lead investigator should inform the complainant with a realistic timeline.

### **Types of possible complaints:**

#### Students Learning and Teaching

- Stage 1 - Initial complaint directed to the class teacher to be resolved and feedback provided
- Stage 2 - Initial complaint forwarded to the AHT for Pastoral or Head of Year (Primary) or Head of Department (Secondary) to be resolved and feedback provided
- Stage 3 - Forwarded to the Head of Pastoral for investigation and feedback
- Stage 4 - Forwarded to the Head of School
- Stage 5 - Forwarded to the PRE.(Parent Relations Executive)
- Stage 6 - Forwarded to the Principal / Vice Principal for investigation and feedback or final resolution.

#### Students Behaviour, Emotional Wellbeing or Support

- Stage 1 - Initial complaint directed to the class teacher to be resolved and feedback provided
- Stage 2 - Initial complaint forwarded to the AHT for Pastoral or Head of Year to be resolved and feedback provided
- Stage 3 - Forwarded to the Head of Pastoral for investigation and feedback
- Stage 4 - Forwarded to the Head of School
- Stage 5 - Forwarded to the PRE.
- Stage 6 - Forwarded to the Principal / Vice Principal for investigation and feedback or final resolution

#### Operations/Facilities/External Services

- Stage 1 - Initial complaint directed to the concerned member of the administration department
- Stage 2 - Initial complaint forwarded to the PRE to be resolved and feedback provided
- Stage 3 - Initial complaint forwarded to the Manager of School Operations to be resolved and feedback provided
- Stage 4 - Forwarded to the Principal for final resolution

#### A Member of Staff

- Stage 1 - Forwarded to the Vice Principal for investigation and feedback
- Stage 2 - Forwarded to the Principal for final resolution

### A Member of the Leadership Team

To be directed to the Principal for investigation feedback and final resolution

### The Principal

To be directed to the Board of Directors through email.

### **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 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 (regulatory authorities) 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. Before this happens, the parent making the complaint would be fully informed.

### Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will not be pursued.

### **Staff Disciplinary Procedures**

Any action taken under staff disciplinary procedures, following parental complaints, would normally be handled confidentially within the school.

Parents would be informed that appropriate action had been taken.

### What happens if a parent is dissatisfied with the outcome?

We will endeavour to ensure that all parents feel satisfied with the outcome and feel that their concerns have been fully addressed.

If a parent is dissatisfied with the outcome, then they should take the following action:

Contact the PRE to state their dissatisfaction and the reasons for it.

At Head of Year level, contact the relevant Head of School

At Head of School level, refer the matter to the Vice Principal

At Vice Principal level write directly to the Principal

### Complaints to the Principal

The Principal or his/her delegated representative will request a full report from the Vice Principal along with all relevant documents. On the basis of this, the Principal or his/her representative may decide to call for a briefing from individual members of staff. As the Principal, or his/her representative, starts to investigate the case they will write to the parent to inform them of the action being taken and will ask the parent if they wish to add what they have already said and will give a date by which the parent may expect a full response.

The Principal or his/her representative may be able to offer a new approach to the matter which may satisfactorily conclude the matter for the parent.

The Principal response will be clear and detailed but, if the parent remains dissatisfied the Principal will also offer a meeting.

If a meeting is requested those involved will be:

- The Principal or his representative
- The Vice Principal
- The relevant member of staff (if deemed necessary)

### **The Parents Pupil complaints, concerns and counselling procedures**

The principles which apply to parental complaints also apply to complaints and concerns from pupils. However, there are differences in approach. We believe that it is important that our

pupils should be able to raise concerns with any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable.

As with parental complaints, anonymous complaints will not be pursued.

Pupils may also raise general concerns via tutor group meetings or to the School Counsellor. At the start of each year, the form tutor and class teachers will explain these procedures to their pupils and students in a manner appropriate to their age.

The School is determined to ensure that all pupils know whom they can turn to. Every classroom has a flow chart of the people students can speak to regarding any concerns.

### **Independent Complaints Procedure**

It is recognised that on occasions the complainant may not be satisfied with the result of a complaint at school level.

Where this is the case, and only following the complaints procedure as outlined in this section, there is an option to put in writing a complaint in relation to either:

- a. The initial complaint
- b. The complaints procedure

All complaints relating to the above will be dealt with by the Board of Directors where an independent investigation will be conducted. Where recommendations are suggested, the Principal and Senior Leadership Team will review policy and procedure and make changes where appropriate.

### **Responsibilities – Staff**

- To understand the importance of handling and resolving the initial complaint and ensuring a resolution is found to satisfy the relevant concerns of the complainant and to avoid further escalation
- To ensure the recording of complaints, implemented actions and those relevant line managers are involved in any escalation of complaints
- To ensure the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team is involved immediately where a complaint escalates beyond their ability to offer an acceptable resolution

### **Feedback Procedure**

It's important for us to understand what our parents and visitors perceive as our strengths and likewise what recommendations for improvement to our service they would like to see take place. This can be achieved in the following ways:

- Email or verbal conversation with the relevant class or departmental representative
- Feedback via the generic school email address found on our website

When it is felt that an issue is more pressing than simple feedback and an informal or formal complaint is deemed necessary, then the Complaints Procedure outlined should be followed.

### **Monitoring and Recording**

- The number of formal complaints per term should be an indicator of how the school is meeting the needs of its students and addressing parent satisfaction
- Patterns and trends should be highlighted by the Senior Leadership Team and proactive actions should take place to prevent re-occurrence
- Recording of complaints will be kept by the Principal for review by The Board of Directors should an escalation be required

### **Evaluation**

Each member of the Senior Leadership Team will be responsible for investigating the process of an unresolved complaint relating to their team, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the process in handling the complaint in accordance with this policy. Feedback should be given for improvements in process to the Principal.

