

## COMPLAINTS POLICY POLICY INFORMATION

Policy Issued on	September 2023
Policy Review Date	August 2024
Signature	B. Heaton
Date	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2023

### RATIONALE

This document highlights the procedure for communication with regards to complaints and the process to follow. Please reference: Appendix 1- Complaints procedures for BSO schools and Guiding Principles

### INTRODUCTION

The Pearl Academy is committed to listening to the views of all our parents in order to improve our provision and believes that all complaints should be seen as important and we endeavour to resolve problems quickly and efficiently and in line with ADEK policy guidelines.

### QUERIES/COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Pearl Academy follows a six-stage procedure as follows:

- Stage 1 - Informal Stage to class teacher
- Stage 2 - Informal stage to Year/Grade leader
- Stage 3 - Formal Complaint to Assistant /Vice Principal
- Stage 4 - Formal Complaint to Principal
- Stage 5 - Formal Complaint to the HQ Education Committee
- Stage 6 –Appeals will be directed to the CEO

1. Contact Class Teacher - *the class teacher can often resolve any parental issues or concerns.*

Timescale- The Class Teacher will acknowledge the problem within in 24 hours and ensure follow up within 2 working days after that.



2. Contact Year Head – *the Year Head may be able to solve the concern or issue.*

Timescale- The Year Head will acknowledge the problem within in 24 hours and ensure follow up within 2 working days after that.

Most concerns can be easily resolved informally by discussion and good communication with the school staff. Clarity is necessary in ascertaining whether a parent is asking a question, or expressing an opinion, rather than making a complaint.

Should the parent remain unhappy despite best efforts, they should be asked to state their views in writing to the relevant Assistant Principal.



3. Contact Assistant Principal/Vice Principal – *If the concern has not been addressed to a parent's satisfaction, the issue can be referred to the AP/VP. This should be done in writing.*

Timescale- Assistant / Vice Principal will acknowledge the problem within in 24 hours and ensure follow up within 10 working day after that. If it is not possible to reply within this timescale a letter will be sent to this effect with a brief explanation for the delay and an indication as to when the complaint is likely to receive a full response.

The Assistant/Vice Principal may provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet him/her to supplement any information provided previously.

When a decision has been reached, the Assistant/Vice Principal will make sure that the complainant is clear about the action taken. The letter will state clearly the right of the complainant to reply to the Principal within 5 days of the decision letter and the need to set out in what way they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.



4. Contact Principal –

a) *The AP/VP will refer to the Principal and the Principal is often able to address serious issues within their school.*

Timescale-

- The complainant may appeal against the decision of the Assistant/Vice Principal to the Principal within 10 days of the decision from the school.
- Within 3 days of a written appeal, the Principal will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request. The letter should also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. The Principal will investigate the complaint and will reply in full within five days.



5. Contact HQ Education Committee - *If the procedure has been followed and the Principal involved, the HQ Education Committee will see parents and liaise with the school to address the complaint. The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. The HQ Education Committee will make a final judgement after investigation.*

This will include provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor consisting of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school.

This process will meet all stated requirements references in the BSO manual page 19 (appendix 1).

Timescale-

- A written statement outlining the decision will be sent to the complainant and the Principal within 5 school days.



6. Contact CEO (for appeals at HQ Education Committee). *In some circumstances and if Parents remain unhappy with the HQ Education Committee's decision, the final appeal may be heard by the CEO. The CEO's decision is final and no further hearings will take place.*

Parents may also contact the school's PRE (Parent Relations Executive) to share complaints / concerns. The PRE will liaise directly with the class teacher to trigger the above process. Any request from a parent to see the Principal is addressed directly by the Principal who decides the required actions. All complaints coming in through the PRE should be resolved within 48 hours.

Any school-related complaints reported directly to ADEK are now returned to the school so that the correct process may be followed.

### INVESTIGATING COMPLAINT

The investigation must be objective and follow the process indicated below:

- Establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- Meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information necessary);
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- Conduct an interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- Keep notes of any interview for record.

### DEALING WITH UNREASONABLE OR PERSISTENT COMPLAINTS

It is vital that such incidents are dealt with effectively and where genuine complaints are raised they should be dealt with fairly, honestly and properly, but where behaviour is characterised by:

- Actions that are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious and/or
- Any insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- Any insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner

The individual should be made aware of their behaviour and processes to stem excessive and unreasonable complaints for such individuals.

This document is made readily available to parents of pupils on the school webpage, Parent Information Channel and Portal.

### Appendix 1: Guiding Principles for reference with the COMPLAINTS POLICY

The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which has regard to local regulatory requirements and circumstances and which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which-

- (a) is in writing;
- (b) is made available to parents of pupils;
- (c) sets out clear time scales for the management of a complaint;
- (d) allows for a complaint to be made and considered initially on an informal basis;
- (e) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (d), establishes a formal procedure for the complaint to be made in writing;
- (f) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e), makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint;
- (g) ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school;
- (h) allows for a parent to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish;
- (i) provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is-
  - (i) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
  - (ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher;
- (j) provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) and-
  - (i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
  - (ii) action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and
- (k) provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where local legal requirements permit access.

#### The guiding principles behind the School's Complaints Procedure are:

- Parents have their class teachers' email address in order to communicate directly regarding any concerns / queries.
- All staff email contacts are frequently publicised with all parents.
- All communication should be acknowledged within 24 hours.
- All communications are dealt with promptly, efficiently, objectively and professionally
- Complaints must be sent in writing
- We aim to respond to specific issues in an informal manner and resolve them quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the person concerned. Outcomes will also be shared in writing.

#### RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology;
- An explanation;
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint;

After an investigation, it may also be the case that the complaint may not have any substance and is therefore considered to be unfounded or unsubstantiated.