CAPITAL SCHOOL BAHRAIN

Complaints Policy

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Table of Contents

1. Procedures for Dealing with Complaints 3
1.1 Informal Stage 3
1.2 Formal Stage 3
1.2.1 Stage 1 3
1.2.2 Stage 2 4
1.2.3 Stage 3 4
2. Complaints Process 6
3. Annex to Complaints Policy 6
3.1 What does the school expect of any person wishing to raise a concern? 7
3.2 What do we mean by 'unreasonably persistent complainants'? 7
3.3 What is harassment? 8
School's responses to unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment 8
3.4 Physical or verbal aggression 9
3.5 Right of appeal 9

1. Procedures for Dealing with Complaints

We undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which pupils will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially.

We recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and that staff, parents, carers and members of the public may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the school.

This policy sets out what to do if this happens.

1.1 Informal Stage

Most complaints/issues can be resolved informally and quickly by discussion with the member of staff concerned or the Principal. Alternatively parents or carers can write to the member of staff or the Principal outlining the issue clearly. Staff can write to their team leader or the Principal.

Any complaint / issue that is put in writing should be written clearly outlining all the issues and what it is hoped that the preferred outcome should be. All complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 3 – 5 working days.

Parent / carers should make an appointment to discuss their concerns with the member of staff who knows about the issue or incident. If the complaint relates to a pupil, ideally the member of staff concerned should be directly involved with the pupil, for example, the class teacher. The member of staff will usually write notes during the meeting. Parents / carers can ask for a copy of these notes.

Staff can make an appointment to discuss concerns with their team leader in the first instance or the Principal.

1.2 Formal Stage

There are three formal stages:

1.2.1 Stage 1

If a parent / carer / staff member is still dissatisfied after the informal stage the matter can be referred to the Principal. This should be done in writing, as this will often make the situation clear to all involved parties.

The Principal will offer a meeting with the parent / carer or other complainant at a mutually convenient time. At the meeting, and through discussion, the Principal will clarify what the issues are. The hopes of what the parent / carer / staff member is trying to achieve will also be discussed. Together all parties will agree an acceptable outcome. This should be to the satisfaction of all parties involved. These should be written down and agreed by all parties so

there is no misunderstanding. Again parents / carers / staff member should be given a copy of this.

If the issue is complex, the Principal may need to speak to other staff and pupils to investigate the concerns. This should happen within 10 school days. If this timescale cannot be met, the principal should inform the parent / carer / staff member that this will take longer, explain the reasons for this, and give a timescale for when the investigation will be completed.

1.2.2 Stage 2

After meeting with the Principal if the complaint is still not resolved to the parent / carer / staff member's satisfaction, the complaint can be referred to the Chairman. This can either be in writing to the Chairman at the school address, or alternatively the school can ask the Chairman to contact the parent / carer direct. The Principal can also refer the complaint to the Chairman.
If the Principal is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight to the Chairman and miss out Stage 1. The Chairman may ask for the complaint to be put in writing (if this has not already happened).

The Chairman will offer to meet with the parent / carer or other complainant, at a mutually convenient time.

The Chairman has 15 school days to investigate the complaint. If it cannot be resolved within this time, the Chairman will inform the complainant and explain why it is taking longer. Reasons for this may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays. The Chairman should, however, give a realistic timescale for when the complaint should be resolved. The Chairman should inform the complainant of when it is expected that the investigation should be completed.

1.2.3 Stage 3

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent / carer / staff member's satisfaction, or Chairman feels that it is necessary, s/he can set up a complaints committee to consider the complaint. The Chairman will decide if this is appropriate.
If the Chairman can resolve the complaint there is no need to hold a Complaints Committee meeting. As far as possible it is recommended that Complaints Committees are a last resort.

The Chairman can appoint an investigating officer to gather evidence and conduct preliminary interviews on the Chairman's behalf. The investigating officer will provide a detailed report of his/her investigation of the complaint. Parents / carers / staff members should be given a copy of this report. It is important that the investigating officer is seen as impartial. So whilst the investigating officer is another governor, s/he cannot be a member of the associated complaints committee.

The complaints committee will be appointed specifically to hear the complaint and will be appointed by the Chairman.

The complaints committee should meet at a time convenient to all parties. The complainant, the Principal, the Chairman and any member of staff the complaint is about will be invited to the meeting. Any person invited can bring a friend or supporter if they wish. The complaints committee will consider any written material, and also give the person making the complaint and the Principal, Chairman and staff an opportunity to state their case and to question others present. The committee will ensure that all present are treated fairly. The meeting will be minuted by an impartial clerk and everyone present will be given a copy of the minutes.

The committee will give its decision, in writing, within five school days after the meeting, along with the reasons for their decision.

The Governors appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process.

If after this school-based process the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, they should write to the Ministry of Education (MOE).

If a complaint is not from a parent / carer of a pupil of the school (an example being a member of the public) these should be made directly to the Principal, preferably in writing.

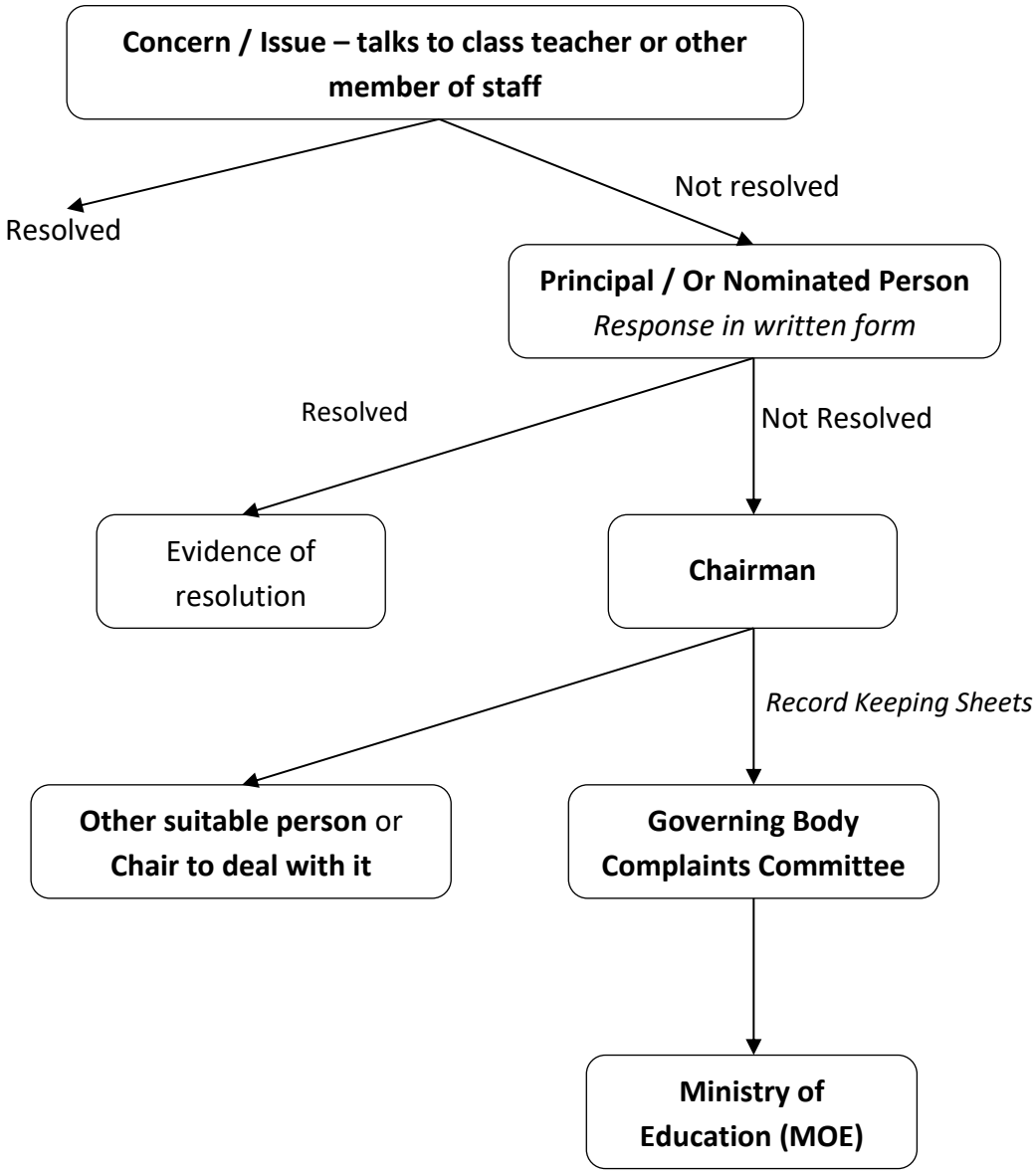
All complaints will be recorded formally by the school in a central log.

It should be noted that schools do not need to consider complaints made more than one year after the incident / situation.

If a complaint is made about an issue that is over a year old the school will write to the complainant explaining why this is the case.

2. Complaints Process

Flowchart for Primary Schools



3. Annex to Complaints Policy

Policy for dealing with Unreasonably Persistent Complaints, Harassment or Aggression

The Principal and staff deal with specific complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the school in accordance with the School's Complaints Procedure.

The majority of complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant. The school is extremely committed to promoting positive relationships with all members of the school community, regardless of age, sex, religion, ability or culture and it welcomes the opportunity to address and resolve issues that may arise. However, there are rare occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns. The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the school and directly or indirectly the overall well-being of the children or staff in the school. In these exceptional circumstances the school may take action in accordance with this policy.

3.1 What does the school expect of any person wishing to raise a concern?

The school expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns with the school to:

- treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect:
- respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- avoid the use of violence, or threats of violence, towards people or property;
- avoid any aggression or verbal abuse;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and
- allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take time:
- follow the school's complaints procedure (and for staff members to follow the appropriate internal staff procedure).

3.2 What do we mean by 'unreasonably persistent complainants'?

For the purpose of this policy, an unreasonably persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include persons who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner.

Unreasonable behaviour may include the following *(not an exhaustive list):*

- actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint;
- uses Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably;
- an insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes;
- an insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- an insistence on only dealing with the Principal on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters;

- an insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the school because it is unlawful.
- making what appears to be groundless complaints about staff dealing with the complaint and seeking to have them replaced.
- abusive or threatening behaviour or language towards school staff.
- failing to specify grounds of the complaint, despite offers of assistance from the school.

3.3 What is harassment?

We consider harassment to include the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, especially when it appears to be conducted in a manner intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution.

Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:

- it appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause;
- the way in which a complaint or other issue is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others;
- it has an unjustifiably significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

School's responses to unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment.

This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with the school's complaints procedure. Taken together, these documents set out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty. However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;
- require any future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication and that these may be required to be

channelled through a third party chosen by the school, for example the Local Authority or a solicitor;

- inform the complainant that, with the exception of urgent communication regarding their child in school, the school will respond to their correspondence on a 6 weekly basis only;
- take legal advice on pursing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation.
- legitimate new complaints will always be considered in an appropriate time frame, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints / Harassment Policy. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals whose conduct falls within the scope of this policy.

3.4 Physical or verbal aggression

The governing body will not tolerate any form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community.

3.5 Right of appeal

All persons who are notified by the school that they are being dealt with under this procedure have the right of appeal. Appeals must be addressed to the Chairman under confidential cover, care of the school. The Chairman will consider each appeal on its merits, consulting with the Principal as appropriate. The outcome of the appeal should be notified to the appellant and copied to the Principal within 10 working days of receipt.