



**NETWORK
INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL**

Complaints Procedure

Policy Statement	3
(1): Introduction & Rationale	3
(2): General	4
Key Personnel	4
Stages of Complaint – Overview	4
Circumstances under which this procedure should not be used	5
Circumstances under which stages of the procedure should be missed out	5
Who is allowed to complain?	6
Publicity and Communication	6
Confidentiality	7
Equal Access, Accompaniment and Representation	7
Monitoring Complaints	7
Findings and Recommendations	8
Time Scale	8
Changes to Time Limits and Deadlines	9
Appeals	9
Vexatious or Abusive Complainants	9
Anonymous Complaints	10
Time Limitations	10
STAGE 1: Informal Discussion	11
Introduction	11
Monitoring	11
Time Scales	11
Response	11
Options for Complainant	11
STAGE 2: Complaint in Writing Addressed to The Head of School	12
Introduction	12
Monitoring	12
Process	12
Time Scales	13
Response	13
Options for Complainant	13
STAGE 3: Complaint in Writing Addressed to The Principal	14
Introduction	14
Monitoring	14
Process	14
Time Scales	15
Response	15
Options for Complainant	15
STAGE 4: Complaint in Writing Addressed to and Reviewed by the Founder of Network	

International School	16
Introduction	16
The Founders Complaint Review Panel	16
Monitoring	17
Time Scales	17
Response	17
Options for Complainant	18
Formal Complaint Form	19

Policy Statement

(1): Introduction & Rationale

The School aims to:

- 1) encourage the resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- 2) ensure that concerns are dealt with quickly, fully and fairly and within clearly defined time limits;
- 3) provide effective responses and appropriate redress;
- 4) maintain good working relationships between all people involved with the School.

The school recognises a distinction between a 'concern' and a 'complaint'. Concerns may be raised regularly with a respective section on an ad hoc and informal basis, and we endeavour to resolve or answer each one satisfactorily.

A complaint is understood to be more serious, raised in a more specific manner, and may be considered as "any matter about which a parent of a student is unhappy and seeks action by the Network International School".

A complaint is considered to be 'formal' if it moves beyond Stage 1, as below. Although all formal complaints must be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example, by email.

A complaint will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.

This policy sets out procedures for existing parents. If a person outside of the Network community wishes to raise a concern, they should contact the Principal directly at Principal@NetworkIntSchool.com

(2): General

- 1) This policy applies to all members of the Network International School community.
- 2) Network International School implements this policy through adherence to the procedures set out in the rest of this document.
- 3) This policy is made available to all interested parties. It should be read in conjunction with related Parental Handbooks from Network International School's respective sections (EYFS, Primary, Secondary).
- 4) This policy is reviewed at least annually, or as events or legislation changes require, by ELT.

Key Personnel

- 1) Stephen Buckland: Principal
- 2) Craig Roberts: Director of Business Administration; **Complaints Co-ordinator**
- 3) Erin Pham: Head of Admissions and Marketing
- 4) Jon Barker: Head of Secondary School
- 5) Jay Thompson: Head of Primary School
- 6) Alice Hand: Head of EYFS
- 7) Carole Kyaing: Founder, Network International School

Stages of Complaint – Overview

Each of the stages below will usually occur in order and there will usually be no return to previous stages. It should be stressed that the majority of complaints are resolved on an informal basis (Stage 1), and this is the default understanding for the School's process; formal levels are only considered if informal actions have evidently failed to resolve the matter reasonably (please note exceptions below).

Stage	Level of Complaint	Responsibility
1	Informal discussion and resolution	School Staff
2	Complaint in writing addressed to and investigated by the respective Head of School	Head of School
3	Complaint in writing addressed to and investigated by the Principal	Principal
4	Complaint in writing addressed to and reviewed by the Founder, Network International School	Founder, Network International School

Circumstances under which this procedure should not be used

- 1) Child protection procedures
- 2) Student exclusions
- 3) Student admissions
- 4) Issues related to criminal investigations and employee grievances must also all be handled separately from this policy.

This complaints policy is distinct from formal staff disciplinary proceedings and this should be made clear to all concerned. There may be occasions where a complaint gives rise to disciplinary procedures which put the complaints process on hold. If and when this occurs, the complainant should be informed. Any non-disciplinary aspects of the complaint should continue to be dealt with through the usual complaints procedures.

Circumstances under which stages of the procedure should be missed out

- 1) This policy sets out the most suitable and effective process for dealing with the majority of complaints that are not covered by alternative procedures (see above). In

most cases any concern or complaint, regardless of whose attention to whom it is initially brought, should be discussed informally (Stage 1) before being submitted at any of the following consecutive formal stages.

2) However, occasionally there will be circumstances under which it is unsuitable for complaints to be dealt with in this way.

3) In all cases where the complaint concerns the Principal directly – that is, the explicit behaviour of the Principal as opposed to school policy or procedures, of which the Principal may be considered a representative – the matter should be raised in Stage 3 to the Founder.

4) A complaint against a member of the whole School leadership team – that is, the explicit behaviour of an individual as opposed to respective school policy or procedure, of which the ELT member may be considered a representative – will be dealt with by the Principal and will commence at Stage 3.

5) Complainants may choose to contact the Principal directly of their own accord. In these cases it will be at the discretion of the Principal as to whether or not it is appropriate for the complainant to discuss the matter informally (i.e. return to stage 1).

Who is allowed to complain?

The procedures in this policy may be used by any parent or guardian of a student who is currently registered on school roll. This policy does not apply to parents of prospective students. It does apply to past students if the specific complaint was initially raised in accordance with this policy, when the student was still registered.

Publicity and Communication

1) Network International School acknowledges best practice in having a complaints procedure.

2) The policy is made available on the school's website.

3) All staff are made aware of the complaints procedure and the various stages involved.

4) At all stages of the complaints procedure, everybody involved needs to be clear about what is happening and what their responsibilities are. In addition, the complainant should be told how to proceed to the next stage of the procedure if and when their complaint is not upheld.

Confidentiality

Complainants have the right to know that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept in appropriate confidence except where a body conducting an inspection requests access to them.

Equal Access, Accompaniment and Representation

- 1) Appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that any individual has the opportunity to raise their concerns or submit a formal complaint. This includes the right to be accompanied or represented by a friend or relative at discussions and hearings and/or to submit formal complaints, which have been written by another individual on their behalf.
- 2) It is an expectation that equal respect will be granted to each person involved within the process and that differences between people will be respected and understood.
- 3) A translator can be provided, on request. The choice of translator in all circumstances must be agreed by all parties, in respect of providing an impartial and objective service.

Monitoring Complaints

At all stages of formal complaints, the following information is recorded in writing and held for a minimum of three years:

- 1) The name of the complainant;
- 2) The date and time at which the complaint was made;
- 3) The details of the complaint;
- 4) The desired outcome of the complainant;
- 5) How the complaint is investigated (including written records of interviews held);
- 6) Findings and recommendations of investigations;
- 7) Any action taken;
- 8) The complainant's response (satisfaction or further pursuit of complaint).

A record of all formal complaints is kept by the Complaints Co-ordinator, as named under Key Personnel, in accordance with best practice.

The record of complaints; constituting all formal complaints at stage 2 or above and any stage 1 (informal) complaints as considered relevant at the time; and their outcomes is

reviewed regularly by the School Leadership Team to identify whether review or change in practice is needed and so that patterns can be identified and appropriate interventions made. Complaints pertaining to the EYFS are kept for a minimum of three years and inspection bodies are provided, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. A report is also made to the Founder on a regular basis.

Findings and Recommendations

At each formal stage of the complaints procedure, any findings and recommendations will be communicated to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. It may be appropriate for the School/section to offer one or more of the following:

- 1) an apology;
- 2) an explanation;
- 3) an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- 4) an assurance that the event concerned will not recur;
- 5) an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- 6) an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

In the second instance, the complainant may then choose to take no further action or to take their complaint to the next relevant stage.

Time Scale

- 1) Although each of the stages within the procedure should occur consecutively, it is not necessary for each stage to follow the last immediately. Complainants may need some time to decide whether or not they wish to pursue the matter any further.
- 2) After each stage, the complainant and the individual dealing with their complaint at that time should agree to an appropriate time limit within which the next stage should be accessed, if at all. If the complaint is not submitted to the next stage within this agreed time limit it will be considered as closed. For example, an outside limit of 10 working days would normally be set.

3) For EYFS, the requirement to notify complainants of the outcome of an investigation within 28 actual days of having received the complaint.

Changes to Time Limits and Deadlines

- 1) Time limits relate to school working days in term time.
- 2) In general, the time limits and deadlines contained within this policy should be adhered to. However, in certain circumstances it may be deemed inappropriate or impossible to guarantee that this is possible.
- 3) Where a complaint leads to criminal proceedings this will always be the case.
- 4) If and when it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this policy, the complainant should be told and given an explanation as to why this has been the case.

Appeals

If, at any stage, as the result of a complaint, a decision or course of action is taken with regards to an individual (apart from the complainant) which they feel is ungrounded, unjustified or incorrect they have the right to appeal to the Founder of Network International School, Carole Kyaing; Carole.Kyaing@NetworkIntlSchool.com

Vexatious or Abusive Complainants

Most parents raise complaints in a reasonable way. However, this may not always be the case. Some people may become vexatious when they repeatedly or obsessively pursue an outcome which is unreasonable or unrealistic.

If a person pursues a complaint in this way, the School may take one of the following courses of action as appropriate:

- 1) Write to the person, reiterating that the matter is concluded and no further correspondence should be expected in relation to the issue raised.
- 2) If the correspondence continues, it will be read and noted but will receive no further acknowledgement.
- 3) Provide a short response referring to previous documents that have already addressed the issues raised.
- 4) Refer the matter to the Founder.

Verbal aggression is rare, but it can be intimidating and unacceptable. Everyone should expect to be treated courteously (children, parents and staff). Network International School will not accept or tolerate threatening behaviour towards staff, and will take appropriate action if required.

Anonymous Complaints

Network International School does not respond to anonymous complaints.

Time Limitations

It is important that in order for a complaint to be dealt with effectively it must be raised in a timely manner. Network International School will not be able to reasonably investigate any new complaint pertaining to an incident that occurred more than twelve weeks prior to submission in writing. Network will endeavour to resolve all issues in a timely manner, though it will not be possible to investigate fully in these instances.

STAGE 1: Informal Discussion

Introduction

The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be dealt with informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved immediately without the need to submit a formal complaint. Indeed, many concerns raised at this level might not be classified as complaints. A complainant will be asked if they wish the issue that they have raised to be recorded as a complaint. Complaints or concerns at this stage may be verbal or written and addressed to the relevant member of staff.

Monitoring

Details of the complaint/concern and action taken, if applicable and appropriate, are recorded in the relevant student's file. This information should be entered by the member of staff responsible for dealing with the complaint/concern. As a matter of course, the relevant line manager to the member of staff dealing with the complaint/concern should be informed of the concern and the outcome.

Time Scales

At this stage, issues should be acknowledged within 24 hours and then considered within 5 working days.

Response

The individual who raised the issue should be informed of any findings or recommendations taken to resolve the matter.

Options for Complainant

If the individual is dissatisfied with the response they have been given and would like to take their complaint further, they should be referred to the School's complaints procedure and told how to move on to the next stage.

STAGE 2: Complaint in Writing Addressed to The Head of School

Introduction

This is the first stage of the formal complaints process and, as a result, all communications between parties need to be carefully recorded and monitored as set out in the 'monitoring complaints' section of this document. Complaints at this stage must be written and addressed to the Head of School.

Monitoring

A formal record of the complaint will be kept by the Complaints Coordinator. If the complaint is addressed to the Head of School, the Principal will also be informed and kept updated on progress.

Process

If the complainant so wishes they can use the template on Page 17. If the complainant has difficulty in putting the complaint in writing, they are asked to make an appointment with the Head of School who will help.

The Head of School will decide the best person to hear the complaint. It would be helpful if the complainant could indicate if there is someone with whom they might have difficulty discussing the complaint so that their views can be respected. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with the complaint, the Head of School may consider referring the complainant to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be.

In most instances, there will need to be an investigation in order to understand the circumstances surrounding the complaint. That investigation will normally be undertaken by the nominated person, or by the Head of School, as may be considered most appropriate in each circumstance.

As indicated within the 'equal access, accompaniment and representation' section of this document, all individuals have the right, at this or any other stages, to be accompanied or represented by a friend or relative at discussions and hearings. This includes the right of teachers to be accompanied by a colleague. If necessary, the investigator will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a student, the student will also usually be interviewed. When students are interviewed, an additional member of staff should always attend.

Time Scales

The Head of School should formally acknowledge the complaint within 24 hours of receipt and should ensure that the investigation is completed within 5 school days.

Response

The individual who raised the complaint should be informed in writing of any findings or recommendations as a result of the investigation.

Options for Complainant

If the individual is dissatisfied with the response they have been given and would like to take their complaint further, they should be referred to the School's complaints procedure and told how to move on to the next stage.

STAGE 3: Complaint in Writing Addressed to The Principal

Introduction

This is the second stage of the formal complaints process and, as a result, all communications between parties need to be carefully recorded and monitored as set out in the 'monitoring complaints' section of this document. Complaints at this stage must be written and addressed to the Principal. If the complaint is about the Principal it should be addressed to the Founder.

Monitoring

A formal record of the complaint will be kept by the Complaints Coordinator. If the complaint is addressed to the Principal, the Managing Director, International Schools will also be informed and kept updated on progress.

Process

If the complainant so wishes they can use the template on Page 17. If they have difficulty in putting their complaint in writing, they are asked to make an appointment with the Principal who will help.

The Principal will decide the best person to hear the complaint. It would be helpful if the complainant could indicate if there is someone with whom they might have difficulty discussing the complaint so that their views can be respected. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with the complaint, the Principal may consider referring them to another staff member.

In most instances, there will need to be an investigation in order to understand the circumstances surrounding the complaint, and why the complaint has progressed from stage 2 to 3. That investigation will normally be undertaken by the nominated person, or by the Principal, as may be considered most appropriate in each circumstance.

As indicated within the 'equal access, accompaniment and representation' section of this document, all individuals have the right, at this or any other stages, to be accompanied or represented by a friend or relative at discussions and hearings. This includes the right of teachers to be accompanied by a colleague. If necessary, the investigator will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a student, the student will also usually be interviewed. When students are interviewed, an additional member of staff should always attend.

Time Scales

The Principal should formally acknowledge the complaint within 24 hours of receipt and should ensure that the investigation is completed within 5 school days.

Response

The individual who raised the complaint should be informed in writing of any findings or recommendations as a result of the investigation.

Options for Complainant

If the individual is dissatisfied with the response they have been given and would like to take their complaint further, they should be referred to the School's complaints procedure and be told how to move on to the next stage.

STAGE 4: Complaint in Writing Addressed to and Reviewed by the Founder of Network International School

Introduction

Complaints rarely reach this formal level, but it is important that the Founder is prepared to deal with the complaint. If the complaint has not been settled at the formal stage and the person making the complaint is not satisfied with the outcome or the way it was dealt with, they can ask for the complaint to be reviewed by the Founder, through a review panel hearing. Upon receiving a formally submitted complaint at this stage the Founder will convene a complaint review panel outlined below.

The Founders Complaint Review Panel

The Review Panel's purpose, in each case, is to review (not to re-investigate) the original complaint and the school's response to it, including its investigation and the outcome. The panel will consist of three members not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, with one member being independent from the management and running of the school. The complainant may be accompanied at the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. It is not usually appropriate for this to be legal representation.

The Review Panel's role is not to undertake a re-investigation of the case, nor to extend its reference beyond the above matters.

The role of the stage 4 Review Panel is to review the actions and supporting evidence of the stage 3 investigation.

The Panel is not permitted to do the following:

- To re-investigate the complaint;
- to reach a definite view on a point of law;

- to criticise the complainant for any “contributory negligence” that may have contributed to the difficulties;
- to be an alternative to a disciplinary hearing, as far as staff are concerned;
- To hear any new complaints (except if it relates to the length of time taken to deal with the substantive complaint)

The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written evidence but any requests received to make an oral representation will be considered sympathetically.

Monitoring

The panel will consider the letter from the complainant and if needed request that the complainant submit in writing (within a reasonable timescale) any further information needed by them relating to their reasons for requesting a review and any perceived failures arising from the investigation process followed. The Principal will be invited to make a written response to the complainant’s submissions.

The Founder will provide the panel with all records, notes or information considered during the investigation (unless prevented from doing so for reasons such as data protection). Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than two days prior to the hearing.

Time Scales

The Founder should formally acknowledge the request for a panel hearing within 24 hours of receipt and should ensure that the review is completed within 25 school days or receiving the request.

Response

The panel should communicate its findings to the complainant, Principal, Head of School (As appropriate) and, where relevant, the person complained of.

Where recommendations are suggested, the Principal and Leadership Team will review policy and procedure and make changes where appropriate.

Options for Complainant

The decision of the Panel will be final.

Formal Complaint Form

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS and return to the Complaints Coordinator who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name :	Student's name :
Student's class :	Relationship to student :
Address :	
Telephone number :	
Please give details of your complaint :	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (To whom did you speak and what was the response?) :	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? :	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details :	
Signature:	Date :