

# International School Seychelles



## **Complaints Policy**

*You are not born for yourself but for the world*

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## 1. Policy Aims

- ISS values the supportive and collaborative relationship it has established with students, parents and the community. However, from time to time the school may receive a complaint. Complaints may take many forms. The school has, therefore, established an agreed policy and procedures in order to ensure that complainants are able to express their views.
- It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of this complaints procedure. ISS takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.
- The school believes that children learn best when there is a positive partnership between the school and home. We recognise that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment and so we need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. Parents and pupils should never feel that making a complaint will adversely affect a pupil or his / her opportunities at the school.

### 1.1. ISS aims to:

- 1.1.1. Resolve complaints in a fair and professional manner – this should be done in a cooperative and speedy manner.
- 1.1.2. Protect the rights of complainants by:
  - i. acting promptly to resolve the dispute of complaint;
  - ii. Ensuring that they are not harassed for having laid a complaint.
- 1.1.3. Protect the rights of staff by:
  - i. ensuring the complaints are fairly investigated and decisions are made on the basis of properly evaluated evidence;
  - ii. Ensuring the process complies with the procedure set out below and relevant contractual provisions.
- 1.1.4. Protect the rights of students by:
  - i. ensuring that complaints are fairly investigated and decisions are made on the basis of properly evaluated evidence;
  - ii. ensuring that a process is in place so that the student does not suffer adversely as a result of making the complaint.
- 1.1.5. ISS will not investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Senior Leadership Team or the Board of Governors, if they deem appropriate, will determine whether the anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

## 2. Policy Scope

- At International School of Seychelles (ISS), it is essential that all members of the school community are entitled to have their points of view properly considered and that all complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible.
- This policy applies to all students and parents.

### 2.1 Definitions

- **Concern:** A concern may be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought’.
- **Complaint:** A complaint may be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’.

### 2.2 Links with other policies and practices

This policy links with several other policies, practices and action plans including:

- Parent contract
- School policies

## 3. Monitoring and Review

- International School of Seychelles (ISS) will review this policy at least once annually.
- ISS will regularly monitor complaints procedures to ensure that this policy is consistently applied.
- To ensure they have oversight of complaints, the Senior Leadership Team will be informed of any matters relating to concerns and complaints, as appropriate.
- The Senior Leadership Team will report on a regular basis to the Board of Governors on issues around complaints, including outcomes.
- Any issues identified via monitoring will be incorporated into the school’s action planning.

#### 4. Complaints procedures for parents

##### 4.1. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

- 4.1.1. A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.
- 4.1.2. Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or Phase Leader. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.
- 4.1.3. Complainants should not approach individual Governors to raise concerns or complaints.

##### 4.2. Timeframe for dealing with complaints

- 4.2.1. Parents must raise the complaint within 30 days of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.
- 4.2.2. All complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time.
- 4.2.3. We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.
- 4.2.4. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days.
- 4.2.5. Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time.

##### 4.3. The three-stage Complaints Procedure

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| Resolving complaints      | <p>At each stage in the procedure, ISS wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• an explanation</li><li>• an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better</li><li>• an assurance that we will try to ensure the event will not recur</li><li>• an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made</li><li>• an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint</li><li>• an apology.</li></ul> |
| Withdrawal of a complaint | <p>If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.</p>  |

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| <p>Stage 1 - Informal Resolution</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.</li> <li>• If parents have a complaint they should contact their child’s Form Tutor in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents’ satisfaction. If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Phase Leader or Head of Department.</li> <li>• Complaints made directly to a Phase Leader or Head of Department will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor, unless the Phase Leader or Head of Department deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.</li> <li>• The Form Tutor will log a record of all concerns and complaints on iSAMS and will bring them to the attention of their Phase Leader. Should the matter not be resolved within one week, or in the event that the Form Tutor and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents are advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure – to make a formal complaint in writing.</li> <li>• If the complaint is against the Principal, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of the Board of Governors.</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Stage 2 - Formal Resolution</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head of Primary / Secondary. The Head of Primary / Secondary will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.</li> <li>• In most cases, the Head of Primary / Secondary will meet or speak with the parents concerned, within five days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.</li> <li>• It may be necessary for the Head of Primary / Secondary or another member of the Senior Leadership Team to carry out further investigations.</li> <li>• The Head of Primary / Secondary will keep records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.</li> <li>• Once the Head of Primary / Secondary is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed in writing of the outcomes of the investigation, the decision taken and the reasons for the decision. This will be within 14 days of the formal complaint being received.</li> <li>• If the complaint is against the Head of Primary / Secondary, the Principal will call for a full report from the Head of Primary / Secondary and for all the relevant documents. The Principal may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Principal will give reasons for his/her decision.</li> <li>• If the complaint is against the Principal, the Chair of the Board of Governors will call for a full report from the Principal and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his/her decision.</li> <li>• If parents are still not satisfied with the decision made, they may appeal the decision to the Board of Governors and move to Stage 3.</li> </ul> |
| <p>Stage 3 - Panel Hearing</p>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chair of the Board of Governors, who has been appointed by the Board of Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.</li> </ul>   |

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|         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaints, one of whom should be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members should be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Chair of the Board of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 21 days.</li> <li>• If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars will be supplied to all parties not later than five days prior to the hearing.</li> <li>• The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.</li> <li>• If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.</li> <li>• Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within five days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents within 7 days informing them of its decision and reasons for it. (The decision of the Panel will be final). The Panel's findings, and recommendations if any, will be sent in writing to the parents, the Principal, the Board of Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.</li> </ul> |
| Records | <p>Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date when the issue was raised</li> <li>• Name of parent</li> <li>• Name of pupil</li> <li>• Description of the issue</li> <li>• Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)</li> <li>• Witness statements (if appropriate)</li> <li>• Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage</li> <li>• Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)</li> </ul>   |

## 5. Complaints procedures for students

- ISS has an 'open door' policy in which we encourage any pupil to come and see any staff member about any issues that may be causing concern.
- Pupils are aware that they can talk to their Form Tutors, Teachers, Phase Leaders, Heads of Department, or a member of the Senior Leadership Team about any issue, as appropriate. They may also approach any other member or the ISS staff with whom they feel comfortable.
- A range of forums are also in place to ensure that student voice is powerful in the school and that concerns are raised and addressed immediately.
- If a pupil finds that they have a complaint about any particular issue that they cannot seem to resolve in a satisfactory manner, the following procedure may be used:

- The pupil will meet with the Phase Leader. The pupil should give details of a) the nature of the complaint and b) the measures already taken by the pupil to find a satisfactory response. Notes will be made by the Phase Leader and agreed with the pupil at the end of the meeting.
- The Phase Leader will
  - a) investigate the complaint
  - b) interview pupils / staff to obtain further details if necessary
  - c) suggest a decision or possible choice of decisions to the pupil, in keeping with the School's policies and procedures and maintaining the rights and duties of pupils.
- If the pupil is still not satisfied, the matter will be passed on to the Head of Primary / Secondary who will review the issue again with the pupil.
- The final decision will be recorded in the pupil's file.

## **6. Managing serial and unreasonable complaints**

- ISS is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.
- ISS defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:
  - refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
  - refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
  - refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
  - insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
  - introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
  - raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
  - makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
  - changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
  - repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
  - refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed
  - seeks an unrealistic outcome
  - makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
  - uses threats to intimidate

- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
  - knowingly provides falsified information
  - publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.
- Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.
- Whenever possible, the Principal or Chair of the Board of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.
- If the behaviour continues, the Principal will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact ISS causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.
- In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from ISS.