



# Complaint Management Policy

Approved by the Board of Governors on  
August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017



CELEBRATE YOUR  
*Roots*  
DISCOVER YOUR  
*Wings*

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## Philosophy

Conflicts and complaints are not unusual in the day-to-day operations of a school. Sometimes they are the result of misunderstandings and sometimes they are due to human error. With the following rules, we want to support all members of the school family by providing constructive guidelines to handle conflicts and complaints in accordance with our School Vision and Mission<sup>1</sup> that stand for openness, honesty and mutual respect.

The parties agree to deal with a conflict or a complaint, based on our mission and vision and endeavor to reach a settlement by agreement. Complaints provide opportunities to clarify issues and ease relationships.

The following document was created with the consultation of all stakeholders as in: Chairperson of the Parent's Committee, Principal, Head of German Section, Head of European Section, Head of Pre-School, Director of Finance, Director of Marketing & Admissions, Director of Information Technology, Chairperson of SRC and President of Student Council

## Principles

- We take every complaint seriously and do not avoid problems. However, anonymous complaints will not be processed.
- We expect a constructive conflict-solving attitude from all participants. Complaints should not be construed an offense against a person, but rather as an opportunity to discover a better way of cooperation.
- Complaints should first be discussed between the parties involved in a respectful way and with the goal of finding a settlement by agreement. They should be escalated to the next level only when the parties do not find a common agreement.
- This guideline is not applicable for severe cases, e.g., if there is suspicion of a criminal act or a violation of professional duties. In these cases, the Principal needs to be involved immediately.
- If complaints are brought to a level of authority just above the parties involved, then each party should first be heard before the issue will be evaluated. When dealing with complaints on any level of authority above the concerned parties, a short written report may be prepared, if requested.
- We live the principle of openness: All concerned parties receive a copy of any kind of written documentation (minutes, notes etc.) during the process of the complaint.
- We want to process a complaint as quickly as possible. A deadline will be defined for every complaint; a solution has to be presented by the deadline. Anyone to whom a complaint is referred must reply to it within two working days. A solution for the problem should be found by concerned parties within seven to ten working days. If no solution is reached between the involved parties, a meeting with staff of the next level of authority must be scheduled within ten working days.
- Formal complaints will always be documented and filed for record by the school management

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to School Mission/Educational Goals/Living and Giving (<http://www.gess.sg/page.cfm?p=872>)

## Practices

### Complaints by Students

1. Students usually address complaints **about their classmates** to their respective homeroom teacher. The homeroom teacher decides if the issue needs urgent attention; and if another teacher, the school counsellor, the liaison teacher, the Head of Department/Section or the Principal's involvement is needed. If there are crucial situations during recess or lunch breaks, the first contact person will be the teacher on yard duty who will resolve the problem, and if necessary will commence further action by involving the homeroom teacher and/or the Head of Preschool, the Head of the German/European Section Primary, the Head of the German/European Section Secondary or the Heads of Section, immediately.
2. Complaints from students **about a teacher** will be brought forward to the respective teacher. Students can seek support from their cohort, from a school counsellor, the liaison teacher or the homeroom teacher. In case the parties involved do not find a solution, the issue needs to be brought up with the respective Head of Department (Pre-School, Primary or Secondary), Head of Section or with the Principal, if necessary, to find a solution together with the teacher.
3. In case there are complaints **about CCAs, VIPs, LEPs, canteen, bus, security staff and cleaners**, the first contact person is the homeroom teacher who will refer it to the respective coordinator and/or the Operations Manager.

### Complaints by Parents and Guardians

1. The first point of contact in the case of parent complaints **against teachers or staff members** is always the person against whom the complaint has been made. If the issue cannot be solved through a direct conversation, it is recommended that parents inform their elected class parent representative about issues with a teacher/staff member and they may also ask him/her to be present in meetings. When issues affect more than one family in class or more than one class, the parent representative may involve the Department parent representative to represent the families in discussions with the teacher/staff member concerned or the responsible Head of Department/Section.

In case complainants decide to contact members of school management or the Board of Governors first, they will be heard and then asked to contact the teacher directly. In case this conversation does not lead to a conclusion, the Head of the European or German Section may be contacted and, if necessary, the Principal.

2. Complaints **about the Principal** need first to be discussed with the Principal. In this discussion, the family may ask a parent representative to be present. In case this conversation does not lead to a conclusion, the Board of Governors may be contacted.
3. In case there are complaints **about CCAs, VIPs, LEPs, canteen, bus, security staff and cleaners**, the first contact person is the respective coordinator and/or the Operations Manager. He/She will look into the matter and may eventually discuss this with the Director of Finance and Administration, who will resolve it with all concerned parties. Failing that,

the Principal may be involved. Parent Representatives can help identify the respective coordinator and/or Operations Manager and may be included in the process.

4. Complaints from parents **about school administration or the admissions department** need to be first discussed with the Director of Admissions and Marketing. In case this conversation does not lead to a conclusion, the Principal may be contacted.

### Complaints about students results

5. In case of **complaints about student results**, parents have to contact the respective teacher. The teacher explains his/her decision in detail, as well as the official rules and regulations and the general resolutions of the school. The teacher needs to be able to show evidence of performance documentation and assessment, if required. The respective Head of Department or Section will be involved, if one of the parties demands it. He/She will then host and mediate the meeting. If necessary, the Principal can ask another teacher to carry out a second evaluation of the exam in question; this could lead to a better result, but may also lead to a worse result.

- **German Section:** If parents query an individual grade or report card after the first semester, it is always to be considered a formal complaint. From a legal point of view, there can never be an objection, because individual grades and report cards do not constitute administrative acts, but rather communications to parents by the School. The year-end report card, the *Haupt-* or *Realschul* exams, as well as Abitur exams, are, on the other hand, administrative acts, and parents may raise an objection against any of these within one month with remedy, or within one year without remedy.
- **European Section:** Final exams of the IB Diploma program are graded externally. Students of age or guardians may apply for a second evaluation of the test, which can lead to a better or worse result.

### Objections to students results

6. **German Section:** In case of an **objection against an administrative act** by the school within the given time limit, the school management will initiate a formal opposition proceeding. In such situations, there needs to be a supporting investigation by the department responsible for the disputed grade, judgement or decision. In case the School cannot find a solution, the proceeding may be forwarded to the responsible commissioner at the KMK<sup>2</sup>, who will proceed with the case.

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<sup>2</sup> KMK: Kultus-Minister-Konferenz

## Complaints by Teachers and Administrative Staff

1. Complaints from teachers or administrative staff **about parents** need to first be discussed with the parents concerned. In case this conversation does not lead to a conclusion, the Head of the German/European Section Primary, the Head of the German/European Section Secondary or the Director of Finance and Administration will be contacted. In case the problem is not yet solved, the Section Heads or Principal may be contacted.
2. Complaints by teachers or administrative staff **about their colleagues**, should be referred to the SRC<sup>3</sup>, following which the respective SMT<sup>4</sup> member may be involved.
3. Complaints **against a member of the SMT** shall be discussed directly with the respective person. If this does not lead to a conclusion, the Principal will be involved.
4. Complaints **about the Principal** shall be discussed in a meeting with him; the SRC may be included in the meeting. In case this does not lead to a conclusion, the Board of Governors may be involved.

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<sup>3</sup> Staff Representative Council

<sup>4</sup> Senior Management Team