



**The British International  
School of Brussels**

# Complaints Policy

Last updated: Nov 2015

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## Introduction

At the BISB we strive to ensure that the vast majority of parental concerns are resolved informally and to the satisfaction of all. This policy sets out how parental concerns can be raised at school, and how the school will deal with them. A formal complaints procedure has been established, providing a means for dealing with more intractable issues, should they arise.

In brief, the policy explains how parents can:

- raise concerns with the class teacher
- raise concerns with the Headteacher
- ultimately, invoke the formal complaints procedure

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## Relevant School Aims

- treat everyone in our school community as an individual, valuing their contributions and accomplishments
- develop good home-school interaction and together improve the quality of learning

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## Appendices

- A.** Formal Complaints Procedure
  - B.** Complaints Procedure Checklist
  - C.** Complaints Form
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# Complaints Policy

## Nature of complaints

This document deals with the following types of parental complaint:

- Complaints about the curriculum
- Complaints about the management of the school
- Complaints against an employee of the school
- Complaints against volunteers
- Complaints against other children
- Anonymous and vexatious complaints

This document does not cover employee grievances or disputes, which are dealt with under staff grievance procedures.

## Management of concerns/complaints

The **Directors of BISB asbl**, on behalf of the School, undertakes to ensure that established procedures exist to deal with concerns/complaints, and that these procedures are easily accessible and available in written form. Should the formal complaints procedure be invoked, the **Directors of BISB asbl** are responsible for ensuring that the procedure is complied with.

The **Headteacher** undertakes to ensure that all staff are aware of the correct procedure for dealing with complaints, and to ensure that steps in the initial stage are complied with. The **Headteacher** is responsible for undertaking the initial investigation of any complaint and for alerting the Directors of BISB asbl should the formal complaints procedure be invoked.

The **staff** undertake to treat any concern courteously and in a professional manner, and to keep the Headteacher adequately informed.

**Parents and carers** are encouraged to raise concerns with staff and are expected to do so in a courteous and reasonable manner.

**Everyone** is expected to treat concerns and complaints in a sensitive manner and with due regard to **confidentiality** except where Belgian legal requirements permit access or enable restriction. Confidentiality guards personal privacy and helps to ensure that information is given freely and fully.

## Raising concerns

The staff and Directors of the BISB actively encourage parents to raise any concerns they may have about the school. By getting feedback – positive and negative – we can continue to address the issues affecting the development and planning of the school. A written record is kept of all complaints. This record will state whether the complaint was resolved at the preliminary stage or continued to a panel hearing

In most cases, any concerns experienced by parents should be raised initially with the **class teacher**. Teachers expect to be involved in dealing with issues concerning behaviour (in the classroom or playground), discipline, what is being taught in the classroom and how it is being taught, homework etc, as well as any concerns about a child's general experience of school. To speak to a teacher about a concern, it is advisable to ask for a time to meet them. Often the best time will be at the end of the school day, or between 8.30-8.55 am. An appointment can be made with the teacher in person, in writing, or by ringing the school secretary and asking for one to be

arranged at a mutually convenient time. If the concern is stated in writing (including email) then staff members should provide a written response within 3 working days.

In some cases, parents may wish to raise a concern directly with the Headteacher without discussing it first with the class teacher. They are fully entitled to do this.

If, having raised a concern with the class teacher, a parent is not content with the response, the matter can then be referred to the **Headteacher**. This can be done in person, by writing/email or by telephone. The Headteacher will strive to come to a mutually acceptable resolution of any concern. If this cannot be achieved within 3 working days of the concern being raised with the Headteacher then the Headteacher will inform the parent about the formal complaints procedure and ensure that the parent has a copy of the school's complaints policy and complaints form.

Should the parent feel, after raising their concern with the Headteacher, that it has not been adequately addressed, they may wish to proceed with a formal complaint. The complaints procedure, set out in Appendix A, will then come into play. The formal procedure will only be invoked if a parent requests it, and after a written complaint has been received. If the concern has been discussed orally up until that point, it must now be put in writing. Help can be given to produce a written record - the Complaints Officer may offer to do this – but the parent must agree and sign the text.

The complaints procedure can be stopped at any point, but only by the person who originally invoked it.

### **Concerns/complaints against the Headteacher**

If a parent wishes to raise a concern about the behaviour of the Headteacher – as opposed to a concern about the policy, administration or management within the school – they may direct their concern to the Senior Directors. The School Office will advise on how to contact the Senior Directors.

### **Concerns/complaints against the Directors of BISB asbl**

In the case of a concern/complaint against an individual school Director, the standard procedures, as set out in this document would apply. If a concern/complaint were made against the Senior Director, then the Senior Director would not act as the Review Officer. This role would be assumed by Mrs Heather Duxbury, MBE (See Appendix A).

### **Concerns/complaints against volunteers**

At the BISB we are very happy to welcome parents into the school to help in many areas of activity, both in the school building and on trips. If there is a concern/complaint about a volunteer or another parent, the Headteacher will apply the principles of this Procedure and seek to resolve the matter. However, a formal complaint cannot be taken out against the school about another parent, unless the complaint has a bearing on the responsibilities of the school.

### **Anonymous and vexatious concerns/complaints**

If complainants do not identify themselves, the school may not be able to take effective action. The Headteacher will decide whether there is anything in an anonymous concern/complaint which requires further investigation. An anonymous complaint may draw attention to a general or specific area of concern, which could then inform the Headteacher's normal process of management and training in the school. However, if the Headteacher considers that an anonymous concern/complaint is unfounded, untrue or malicious, then no action will be taken.

A vexatious concern/complaint is one where there are insufficient grounds for complaint, and where it is considered that the concern/complaint is being made merely with the intent of disturbing the defendant. If a vexatious complaint is made by an employee against another employee, this will be dealt with through the staff disciplinary process. If a vexatious complaint comes from someone else, the Headteacher will consult with the Senior Directors to discuss what action might be appropriate.

### **Staff training**

All staff will be made aware of the complaints policy and will be given training in giving and receiving information in this context. They will be given guidance in what types of comment should be dealt with informally, and what should be dealt with as a formal complaint.

### **Policy review**

The review of this policy will be included in the SMT review each June, with a detailed reconsideration by staff at least every five years.

## Appendix A: Formal Complaints Procedure

*If informal discussion fails to provide a resolution to a concern, the formal complaints procedure can be invoked. This is set out below.*

### Stage 1: Investigation

The Headteacher will normally be the Complaints Officer. However, where a complaint is against the Headteacher, a member of the Directors of BISB asbl will assume this role.

- a) A formal written complaint must be produced, and signed. This should detail the nature of the complaint and the surrounding circumstances, as fully as possible.
- b) All complaints received by the Complaints Officer should be recorded in a complaints log. The details recorded should be brief, identifying details – name, date, nature of complaint – but revealing no background on the substance of the complaint.
- c) All complaints should be acknowledged in writing by the Complaints Officer within 1 working day of receipt. This acknowledgement should also state the Complaints Officer's understanding of the nature of the complaint.
- d) The Complaints Officer should investigate the complaint promptly and thoroughly, and provide a written response within 10 working days. If appropriate, reference should be made to Stage 2 in the complaints procedure and to the Review Officer.
- e) The Complaints Officer will generally conclude one of the following:
  - The complaint is not upheld (giving reasons why)
  - The complaint is dealt with under another procedure
  - The complaint is upheld, in which case appropriate action will be proposed (eg - change in practice, training, supervision, disciplinary or other management action)
- f) The outcome of the investigation must be communicated to the complainant in writing and recorded in the complaints log.

### Stage 2: Review

If a review of the Complaints Officer's conclusion is deemed necessary by the complainant, then the Senior Directors would utilise the services of Mrs Heather Duxbury MBE, former Primary Head Teacher of St George's International School Luxembourg-Hamm to act as Review Officer. She will then establish and chair a review panel consisting of two other people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. These other panel members could be selected by the Review Officer from the school community or staff or otherwise as he / she deems fit for the carrying out of a fair review bearing in mind the nature and extent of the complaint. Parents may attend the panel hearing and can be accompanied if they wish (although at this stage legal representation is not appropriate).

The main function of the Review Officer is to assess whether the complaint was handled properly, and whether the Complaints Officer's response was appropriate. However, the Review Officer may also be able to assume a mediation role and see whether a mutually satisfactory position can yet be reached.

- a) The complainant should inform the Review Officer that they wish the complaint and the response to be reviewed, and why.
- b) The Review Officer should acknowledge this request in writing within 1 working day and explain the review procedure.
- c) The Review Officer should set up a review meeting with the complainant and the Complaints Officer within 10 working days if possible, to explore whether a resolution may be possible.

- d) The Complaints Officer should prepare a report for the Review Officer, outlining the reasons for the Complaints Officer's decision. This may be a short report, backed up by the foregoing written documents and any other relevant evidence.
- e) The complainant may also, if desired, submit further evidence to back up their case.
- f) Any written submissions must be presented to the Review Officer at least 2 days before the arranged review meeting.
- g) At the review meeting, the Review Officer may ask questions of both parties and try to establish whether there is any possibility of reaching a mutually agreeable resolution.
- h) The Review Officer should provide a written response to the Complaints Officer and the complainant within 15 working days of the date of the meeting. Any findings or recommendations made by the review panel will go not only to the complainant and headteacher but also, where relevant, the person complained about.
- i) There is no further course of appeal.

## Appendix B: Complaints procedure checklist

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		Completed	Date
<b>Initial stages</b> (to be completed by Headteacher)			
1	Has there been an opportunity for informal discussion?		
2	Have the parents been given a copy of the complaints policy and complaints form?		
<b>Stage 1</b> (to be completed by Headteacher)			
3	Has there been a formal complaint to Headteacher in writing?		
4	Has the Headteacher acknowledged the complaint?		
5	Is there agreement about what the complaint is, in writing?		
6	Has Headteacher provided a written response to complainant?		
<b>Stage 2</b> (to be completed by Senior Directors/Review Officer)			
7	Complainant requests review of response.		
8	Review Officer writes to parents to acknowledge receipt and explain review procedure		
8	Written report for Review Officer from Headteacher in response to complaint. (Complainant may also provide further material – optional)		
9	Meeting – Review Officer, complainant (who can be accompanied if they wish (although at this stage legal representation is not appropriate)) and Headteacher		
10	Written response from Review Officer to complainant and Headteacher and also, where relevant, the person complained about.		

## Appendix C: Complaints form



**Name**

**Contact details**

Tel

Email

**Child's name**

**Class**

I wish to make a complaint about the school. I have already discussed the matter informally, but now wish to invoke the formal complaints procedure.

**Signed**

**Date**

**Nature of Complaint**

*Please give details of your complaint. You can continue on the other side of this paper, if necessary, or attach a separate sheet. Please include details of when, and with whom, your concern has already been discussed.*

