

Academic Complaints Policy at The British School of Egypt



**Advice, Guidance and Accepted Protocol
for dealing with Academic complaints at The BSE**

Complaints Policy 2022/2023

At The BSE we welcome suggestions and comments from parents and take any complaints and concerns that they may raise very seriously. We encourage parents to bring these to our attention as early as possible so that we have the opportunity to rectify a problem or explain the school's position before a concern becomes more serious.

The school recognises that a student's education will be enhanced by the wholehearted support of parents and appropriate accessibility to its staffing body, the Extended Middle Management and the Senior Leadership Team. The BSE recognises that many worries or concerns can be managed without the need for formal procedures, providing that the concern is taken seriously and addressed at an early stage.

In many cases, the class or subject teacher will receive the first approach and the issue is resolved immediately. However, formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue remain unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

The BSE aims to be fair, open, consistent and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

It is inevitable in any institution that there are occasions when parents or other stakeholders are dissatisfied with the service provided. This policy advises all persons on how to direct a complaint and the potential escalation procedures around this.

We will to ensure that:

- Parents who wish to make a complaint know how to do so
- We as a school respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way
- Parents realise that we will listen and take all complaints seriously
- We take appropriate action where necessary both fairly and consistently applying the approved guidance and policy approved by the Ministry of Education.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A 'concern' may be treated as 'an expression of worry, uncertainty or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. A complaint may be generally recognised as 'an expression or statement of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

How should Parents complain?

- Parents who have a concern or complaint, should normally raise these in the first instance with their child's class teacher or form tutor (EYFS to Year 9). Parents could also raise their

concern with the Head of Year (KS3) or YGC (EYFS & Primary). These concerns or complaints should still be raised by email in the first instance.

- In KS4 Parent complaints can be raised with Mr Magdy Tadross via the KS4 Admin office or by email directly.
- In some cases parents may contact the appropriate KS Office by telephone to explain they would like to make a complaint, **parents need to be aware that this step will involve the completion of a complaint form** by the administrative office while the parent is on the phone, which will then be passed to the class teacher / subject teacher or YGC.
 - *It is likely if a complaint is raised by telephone to a KS office the next step will involve the class teacher or YGC / HoY or Head of Subject returning the call or email to better understand the concern and request additional details.*
- **The administrative managers and office staff are not able to provide any feedback or judgement regarding parental complaints, they will complete the complaint form and then it will be passed to the appropriate member of staff, either ELT or SLT as listed above.**
- The BSE will not set meetings or arrange for groups of Parents to all raise concerns or complain in one meeting.
 - Each parent that wishes to complain will be heard individually, as we value the input of all parents in the complaint process and respect that each child will be affected differently by any concern or complaint raised.
- When parents request a face to face meeting it has to be with good reason and in order to address, explain or present a concern that can not be done by email or by completing the complaint form.
 - Parents must be aware that following a request for a meeting face to face an appointment will be set at a time convenient to the teacher / staff member making the appointment, it is also recommended that in advance of that meeting the parents still complete the official complaint form.
 - When requesting a meeting to explain a problem or concern it is unlikely that at that meeting there will be a resolution.
 - It is most likely that the teacher will need to collate extra information, discuss with line managers or colleagues to gain evidence and possibly investigate with students before making decisions and feeding back.
 - Parent meetings at the beginning of the process to explain something that could've been shared via a complaint form often delay the process of reaching a conclusion or resolution.
- **It is therefore recommended face to face meetings take place as a second step in the process** so that the findings, resolutions and conclusions can be presented or so that updates and extra information can be collated.
 - *Therefore it is advisable to ensure that information is correct as early as possible in the process that the initial contact is by email with all details included ahead of any set meetings.*
 - All face to face meetings will be at a time that is mutually convenient and in some cases it will have to be scheduled for several days after the initial contact was made.
- **Parents that visit the school without a scheduled appointment and who wish to make a complaint will need to adhere to the following steps:**

- *A complaint form will be provided in Main School reception (example attached below) that must be completed by the parent. Parents also have the option of completing the complaint form online via the link that is on the school website.*
- *When completing the form parents can specify who they wish the complaint form to be passed to. In most cases it will be passed via the Principal or another member of SLT or directly to Ms Dalia Hosny, who will decide the best course of action and who will organise the follow up for the parents.*
- ***Parents when they have visited the school without an appointment set can be assured that their complaint will be addressed as a priority.***
 - *Parents will receive updates from the Principal / SLT / ELT the same day as to the next steps that are being taken.*
- *Once the complaint form is completed it is not necessary to wait for a face to face meeting to repeat the same information.*
- *The MoE Social Worker may be asked to listen to any Parent concern or complaint and will give feedback to the SLT before any actions are taken.*

What is the complaint process / overview / what will happen next?

- If a parent raises a concern or a complaint, it will hopefully be possible to resolve the matter quickly and to their satisfaction by explaining the school system or detailing how the school will respond to the complaint.
- In many circumstances, the staff member contacted will require time to investigate before a response can be made. The parent will be given a date by which they will receive a further response and follow up.
- If a detailed explanation of the issue is needed, an email report will be sent to the parent as quickly as possible, informing them of the outcome of their complaint and will explain any action taken or proposed. Alternatively, the parent may be invited to a meeting at the school to explain the feedback and the outcomes of any investigation or outcome.
- Where a complaint is considered more complex and requires additional time for investigation, this will be carried out, this is likely to be by a member of The BSE SLT.
- On the staff of The BSE is a Ministry of Education approved Social Worker. It is the responsibility of the Social Worker to ensure that Ministry of Education guidance is followed.
- The SLT at The BSE may choose to involve the Social Worker at any stage of the complaint process to support the Parent complaint, to investigate an issue or to give feedback and explain the outcomes and sanctions that have been applied.
- **If the parent is not satisfied with the response of the class teacher or form tutor or feels that the matter is sufficiently sensitive or serious, they should contact the Head of Year who will then be able to liaise with relevant staff OR put the parent in contact with the appropriate Head of Department OR refer the parent directly to the Senior Leadership Team.**
- Parents that wish to contact the Executive Principal or the Principal, can do so - however, matters usually have to be referred back to the Head of Year or Head of Key Stage for clarification and investigation. It is advised to seek the advice of the HoY/YGC/HoKS in the first instance to aid the process. *Any complaint form marked for the attention of the Principal or Executive Principal will still be passed directly to them.*

The main types of complaint and the stages of those complaints are included below:

| If Parents have a complaint or concern directly related to their child's Teaching, Learning or Academic Progress: | |
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| Stage 1 | Initial concern or complaint can be directed to the Class teacher in EYFS or Primary or the subject teacher or Form Tutor in KS3. This should be sent by email in the first instance. Those staff members contacted will look to resolve and feedback by email or phone call directly to the parent. A log will be kept and shared with ELT/SLT. |
| Stage 1A | <i>The BSE complaint form can be found on the website, when submitted it will be received directly by the Principal who will forward it to the appropriate member of staff for follow up and resolution.</i> |
| Stage 2 | Initial complaint passed / directed to the Head of Department (Secondary) or Head of Year (Primary) by Stage 1 staff to be resolved and feedback provided. |
| Stage 3 | Forwarded / passed to the SLT - Head of Key Stage 3 or 4, Head of EYFS or Deputy Head of Primary by Stage 2 staff who will be responsible for further investigation and feedback. |
| Stage 4 | Forwarded to the Head of Primary or Principal in KS3 by Stage 3 staff - for investigation and feedback. |
| Stage 5 | Forwarded to the Executive Principal for final resolution. |

| If the complaint is directly related to Students Behaviour, Wellbeing or Safeguarding. | |
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| Stage 1 | Initial complaint directed to the class teacher or form tutor to be addressed, resolved and feedback provided. All Safeguarding concerns can be passed directly to Stage 3. |
| Stage 1A | If a complaint is based on school policy or because Parents do not agree with a sanction being applied a complaint form can be completed and addressed directly to Mrs Farah Samir Head of Pastoral or Mr Tim Hoban Principal. |
| Stage 2 | Complaint directed to the Head of Year (EYFS & Year 1-9), Heads of Year & YGC's to also involve Head of EYFS, Deputy Head of Primary or Head of KS3 as required to be resolved and feedback provided. |
| Stage 3 | Forwarded to the Head of Pastoral who is responsible for investigation and feedback. |
| Stage 4 | Forwarded to the Principal for further investigation and feedback. |
| Stage 5 | Forwarded to the Executive Principal for final resolution |

| If the complaint is related to the Operations/Facilities/Services provided by the school: | |
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| Stage 1 | Initial complaint directed to the appropriate Administrative Manager to be resolved and feedback provided - examples would include Canteen, Transport, Security or Site Housekeeping & Maintenance. In all cases following a resolution, a report must be shared with the Executive Principal. |
| Stage 2 | Initial complaint directed to the Administrative Director to be resolved and feedback provided - Report must be shared with EP. |
| Stage 3 | Forwarded to the EP/MD for final resolution. |

| If the complaint is regarding a member of staff: | |
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| Stage 1 | This can be made to SLT directly (<i>Head of EYFS, Deputy Head of Primary, Head of Primary, Head of KS3 or Head of KS4</i>) for further investigation and feedback - Initial report must be shared with Principal & Executive Principal who will oversee resolution and next steps. |
| Stage 2 | Forwarded to the Principal / Head of Pastoral for further investigation and feedback. |
| Stage 3 | Forwarded to the Executive Principal for final resolution |

| If the complaint is regarding a member of the Senior Leadership Team: | |
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| Stage 1 | Forwarded to the Principal or Executive Principal for investigation and feedback |
| Stage 2 | Forwarded to the Executive Principal / MD for final resolution |

Confidentiality

Parental complaints or concerns will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of the complaint or concern will be limited to the Head of Section and those directly involved. It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents will not rebound adversely on their children in any way. Parents' complaints will not be disclosed or discussed with other Parents during investigation. Anonymous complaints will not be pursued.

Staff Disciplinary Procedures

Any action taken under staff disciplinary procedures, following parental complaints, would normally be handled confidentially within the school. Parents would be informed that appropriate action had been taken in line with school policy.

What happens if a parent is dissatisfied with the outcome?

We will endeavour to ensure that all parents feel satisfied with the outcome and feel that their concerns have been fully addressed. If a parent is dissatisfied with the outcome then they should take the following action:

- At YGC or Head of Year level, contact the relevant Head of Section / Head of KS.
- At Head of Section level, refer the matter to the Principal.
- Principal level refer directly to the Executive Principal.
- At all levels the staff at The BSE can choose to involve the Ministry of Education approved Social Worker for support, guidance and to be involved in the process.

If complaints are escalated to the Executive Principal, a full report from the Principal along with all relevant documents will be requested. On the basis of this, the Executive Principal may decide to call for a briefing from individual members of staff. As the Executive Principal starts to investigate the case the parents will be informed of the action being taken and will ask the parent if they wish to add what they have already said and will give a date by which the parent may expect a full response.

The Executive Principal may be able to offer a new approach to the matter which may satisfactorily conclude the matter for the parent. The Executive Principal response will be clear and detailed but, if the parent remains dissatisfied the Executive Principal will also offer a meeting to explain the details and outcome fully.

Pupil complaints, concerns and counselling procedures

The principles which apply to parental complaints also apply to complaints and concerns from pupils. However, there are differences in approach. At The BSE it is important that our pupils should be able to raise concerns with any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable. Pupils may also use the school email system to make a member of staff aware of their concerns in a confidential manner. As with parental complaints, anonymous complaints will not be pursued.

Pupils may also raise general concerns via tutor group meetings or to the School Counsellors. At the start of each year, the form tutor and class teachers will explain these procedures to their pupils and students in a manner appropriate to their age. The School is determined to ensure that all pupils know to whom they can turn to. Every classroom has a flow chart of the people students can speak to regarding any concerns - this Pastoral chart includes safeguarding and counselling options.

Important Responsibilities for all Staff involved in the complaint process to be aware of:

- Staff must understand the importance of handling and resolving the initial complaint and ensuring a resolution is found to satisfy the complainant and to avoid further escalation in the majority of cases.
- Staff must ensure that they record all complaints along with implemented actions and that relevant line managers are involved in any escalation of complaints according to the steps outlined in this policy.
- Staff must ensure the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team is involved immediately where a complaint escalates beyond their ability to offer an acceptable resolution.

The number of complaints per term should be an indicator of how the school is meeting the needs of its students and addressing satisfaction. Patterns and trends should be highlighted by the Senior Leadership Team and proactive actions should take place to prevent re-occurrence.

Recording of complaints will be kept by the Executive Principal for review by the MD should an escalation be required.

Investigation Procedure

In any investigation that is required following a complaint, steps should be taken to ensure that the investigation is conducted in an impartial and objective manner. The BSE SLT will be responsible for overseeing this process, if delegated to a member of the Pastoral Team or the MoE Social Worker the SLT will still be involved throughout to oversee. All Steps detailed below are specific to investigations and follow a complaint from a Parent:

Step 1:

A written statement will be taken from the student (s) whose parents have complained. This helps to establish a picture of the complaint from both the perspective of the concerned parent and the student/pupil. This will provide the investigator a framework from which the investigating officer can conduct the investigation. It also ensures that the allegations are coming directly from the accuser, and have not been “filtered” by anyone else.

It is advised in Step 1 to review any CCTV or video footage of the incident, or to request evidence be reviewed that has been presented, e.g. Screenshots, recordings or printed copies. This will allow in Step 2 for the interview to be focussed and directed at addressing any concerns raised.

Step 2:

A written statement will be taken from the person (accused) who is the basis of the formal complaint. Taking a statement from both parties will allow the investigator to cross reference both accounts and highlight any discrepancies. The incident should not be discussed with the accused before a written statement is taken so their interpretation of events is not influenced. Steps 1 or 2 are interchangeable to minimise disruption for both parties.

Step 3:

Discrepancies in written accounts will be investigated further. If there are any discrepancies in the written statements the investigator may seek further clarification from the complainant/accuser or accused. This is to ensure that the investigator fully understands both accounts and is able to draw their conclusions as to appropriate action.

This is also an opportunity to interview witnesses. Witness statements must be recorded and completed on the formal The BSE witness statement forms. It is important that witness views are balanced and are not designed to favour one ‘side or the other’. Every effort should be made to avoid presenting statements from witnesses that may have a biased perspective on the outcome.

At this point if, after reviewing the written statements, it appears that there are no reasonable grounds for concern, the investigation will be concluded and those persons involved informed. If the evidence collected provides clear outcomes that require the school to apply sanctions then the appropriate policies and systems will be applied.

Please note that all school records of an incident are confidential and will not be released to parents and any actions to be taken is at the school's discretion. In addition, if disciplinary action is taken against the accused, the school will not enter into discussion as to the nature or the severity of the action being taken.

Feedback to the original complainants will be by email and will present the conclusions that the school has reached. It will emphasise that actions have been carried out (or not) in line with school policy and that whilst the records remain on file the complaint itself can be concluded.

Managing serial and persistent complaints

The BSE always does its best to be helpful to people who contact the school with a complaint or concern or a request for information. However, there are occasions when, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied.

If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, they will be informed that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant continues to contact the school on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' whilst the decision to stop responding will never be taken lightly it may be taken given consideration of the following:

- The BSE has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns and has applied the systems, sanctions and procedures in line with its policies.
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of The BSE position and their options.
- The complainant has contacted the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.
- The emails, or telephone calls are abusive or aggressive.
- The complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff.
- If an individual's behaviour is causing disruption, The BSE will implement a tailored communication strategy that may include the following:
 - restricting the individual to a single point of contact via an email address
 - limiting the number of times the individual can make contact, such as a fixed number of contacts per term.
 - Contact numbers and email addresses being circulated amongst staff for awareness of the issue and steps taken.

In reference to above please see template of school complaint form below:



The BSE Concern & Complaint Form:

Please complete the form below with as much detail as possible. *There is an electronic version available which can be accessed via the school website.*

| | | |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| Please highlight below who do you wish this form to be passed to following its completion? | | |
| Class Teacher / Form Tutor | Head of Subject / ELT | Head of Year / Year Group Coordinator |
| MoE Social Worker | Head of Section SLT | Principal / Executive Principal |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Your Name (Complainant) | |
| Pupils Name / Student Name | |
| Class / Form | |
| Your relationship to Pupil | |
| Your email address | |
| Your mobile phone number | |

| |
|---|
| Please provide details of your concern or complaint and include whether you have already spoken to anyone at the school regarding this concern: |
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| What actions do you feel would resolve this concern, complaint or problem at this stage? |
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Are you attaching or including any evidence? If so please provide details. If you wish to send any electronic evidence (screenshots, emails, messages, photos) they can be emailed directly to Tim Hoban Principal at tim.hoban.bse.edu.eg

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| Signature | |
| Date | |

Please note the following:

The complainant will receive a more effective response if:

- You explain the complaint in full detail and as early as possible.
- You cooperate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- You respond promptly to requests for further information or follow up meetings.
- You treat all those involved in handling the complaint with respect.
- You refrain from publicising the details of the complaint on social media and respect confidentiality of all parties involved.
- You rely on The BSE to treat your concern with respect and the seriousness that is required and in a timeframe that ensures all aspects of the complaint are dealt with fully.
- *A copy of this form can be made for you to keep if you request it.*

| School Use Only | |
|------------------------|--|
| Date & Time received | |
| How received | |
| Received by | |
| Complaint referred to | |
| Date and time referred | |