Downe House
Muscat

Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

The school aims to provide the best possible quality of teaching and pastoral care to its pupils. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that, as in most organisations, things do not always go smoothly, and it may occasionally be the case that parents may wish to make a complaint. If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with the procedures outlined below. Complainants can also be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially and that their child/children will not be penalised for a complaint that they or their child/children raise in good faith.

2. Availability

The Complaints Policy is made available to all complainants via the school's website or on request from the school.

3. Relevance

Please note that this Complaints Policy does not apply to parents of pupils who have left the school.

4. Timescales

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. Formal written complaints will be acknowledged within one working day if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible.

The school aims to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time, with Stage 3, the Panel Hearing, to be completed within a further 28 days.

If a complaint is made during a school holiday, the complaint will be acknowledged within seven working days. Any investigation or resolution and associated timescales will be confirmed with the complainant on a case-by-case basis during any school holiday period.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their daughter's Class Teacher (KG1 to Grade 6) Tutor if in Secondary School or our dedicated Parent Experience Officer.

In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the above people cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult another more senior member of staff.

Complaints made directly to the Principal, or the Assistant Heads may be referred to the relevant member of staff if she deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

The relevant member of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints dealt with by them and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within fourteen days or if the relevant member of staff and the complainant fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the complainant will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

If, however, the complaint is against the Principal, the complainant should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of the Board. Contact details can be obtained from the School Office.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the complainant should put their complaint in writing to the Principal. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Principal will meet with or speak to the complainant concerned, normally within seven days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigations.

The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and the complainant will be informed of this decision in writing. The Principal will also give reasons for his decision.

If the complainant is still not satisfied, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

If the complaint is against the Principal, the Board of Directors will call for a full report from the Principal and for all the relevant documents. The Board may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the complainant to discuss the matter further. Once the Board is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, the complainant will be informed of the decision in writing. The Board will give reasons for their decision.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

If the complainant seeks to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Board.

All Stage 3 complaints (including those made against the Principal) will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of two members of the Board Directors, one member from the School Education Committee and one other person who is independent of the management and running of the School, none of whom will have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The Board will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen days.

If the Board 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 shall be supplied to all parties not later than three days prior to the hearing.

The complainant may be accompanied at the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the Board will resolve the complainant's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the Board will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of all facts, they consider relevant, the Board will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within seven days of the Hearing. The Board will write to the complainant informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Board will be final. The Board 's findings and recommendations, if any, will be sent in writing to the complainant, the Principal, where relevant, any individual subject of the complaint.

A copy of the findings and any recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Board of Directors and the Principal.

Complainants can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where there is a legal requirement to share them.

5. Policy History

Date of adoption of this policy	January 2022
Date of last review of this policy	January 2025
Date for next review of this policy	August 2027
Policy owner (SLT)	Principal
Policy owner (Board)	Board