



Complaints Policy

Policy Category: Whole School

Responsible: Principal

Date: March 2017

Reviewed: July 2021

Next Review: August 2022

1 Introduction

There may be occasions when parents or carers are dissatisfied and wish to make a complaint.

The primary aim of this policy is to resolve any complaints as fairly and quickly as possible. Complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. We believe that it is beneficial to deal with a complaint informally wherever possible and as speedily as is practicable. This policy is available to parents on the Denla British School website and is also available in hard copy, but applies only to current students. Former parents may only raise a complaint that relates to the period of time that their child was a student at Denla British School.

Application: separate guidelines apply in the event of a child protection issue or if the Principal asks a student to leave and the parents seek a Board of Directors' Review of that decision. This policy sets out a four-stage procedure:

- **Stage 1:** informal raising of a concern or difficulty, notified either orally or in writing to a member of staff; every effort will be made to resolve the concern at this stage.
- **Stage 2:** a formal complaint in writing to the Principal.
- **Stage 3:** a renewed complaint in writing to the Principal following preliminary discussions or, in exceptional circumstances, to the Board of Directors.
- **Stage 4:** a reference to the Complaints Panel

A concern about the **safety** of your child should be notified **immediately** to the person you believe is best placed to take urgent action. It should be followed up in writing to the Principal

2 Policy Aim and Statement

Aim: the aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and students' confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. We will try to resolve every concern or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances.

Policy statement: we need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. We recognise that a difficulty that is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, which would be damaging to relationships and also to our school culture. Parents and students should never feel, or be made to feel, that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a student or his/her progress at the School. The policy, however, distinguishes between a concern or difficulty which can be resolved informally and a formal complaint which will require investigation.

3 Management of Complaints

Concerns and complaints will be managed in accordance with the four procedural stages set out in this policy.

Senior Management Team with Pastoral Responsibility: As far as possible, a senior member of staff is available at all times when the School is open. In the absence of the Principal or by way of delegated authority, the Senior Management Team all have authority to take decisions relating to most matters of pastoral care and discipline.

Noting a Concern or Complaint: every formal concern or complaint notified to a member of staff will be noted, together with the action taken.

Procedures or Each Stage of the Complaints Policy

Stage 1: Concerns and Difficulties

Concerns: we expect that most concerns, where a parent or student seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally. Examples might include dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care, or about allocation of privileges or responsibilities, or about a timetable clash or some other aspect of the School's systems or equipment, or a billing error.

Notification: please raise the concern initially as set out below. While communication is preferred in English, the School can provide an interpreter or translation service.

- Education issues - if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, please speak or write to the teacher concerned, the Class teacher, Form Tutor or Subject teacher, the Head of Pre Prep and Prep, or Vice-Principal Academic, as appropriate.
- Pastoral Care - for concerns relating to matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to the Form Tutor, Class Teacher, or the Head of Prep School Pastoral and Co-curricular
- Disciplinary Matters - a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it, and, if not resolved, with the Head of Prep School Pastoral and Co-curricular.
- Financial Matters - a query relating to fees or extras should be referred to the Bursar.

Acknowledgement: we will acknowledge a written notification by telephone, fax, e-mail or letter within two working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the holidays. A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing. Contact will be retained until the matter is resolved.

Unresolved concerns: DBS will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and preferably within

24 hours of the concern being raised. A concern which has not been resolved by informal means within 10 working days should be notified in writing as a formal complaint which will be dealt with in accordance with Stage 2 below.

Stage 2: Formal Complaints

Notification

An unresolved concern under Stage 1, or a complaint which needs investigation, or dissatisfaction with some aspect of the School's policies, procedures, management or administration should be set out in writing with full details and sent with all relevant documents and your full contact details either via email or in an envelope addressed to the Head of Pre-Prep and Prep for students in EY1 - Y4 and the Vice - Principal Academic for students in Y5 - Y8. Your complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within two working days during term time, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale. A Complaints Form will be completed at the same time. The Principal will be informed of your complaint.

Investigation

The Head of Pre-Prep and Prep or the Vice-Principal Academic will investigate the complaint. They may request additional information from you and will probably wish to speak to you personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. The outcome of the investigation will be reported to the Principal who will then notify you in writing of his/her decision and the reasons for it. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to your complaint.

Outcome

The Principal's aim will be to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution to the complaint within one calendar month from the receipt of the complaint. Please note that any complaint received within one month of the end of term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of school holidays and the unavailability of personnel.

Stage 3: Reference to the Principal

Notification: if you are dissatisfied with the outcome under Stage 2, a renewed complaint in writing to the Principal following preliminary discussions can be made. Your letter should give full details of your complaint and enclose all relevant documents and your full contact details. Your letter will normally be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within four working days during term time, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale.

Action by the Principal: the Principal will investigate the complaint following procedures equivalent to those described in Stage 2 (above). When the Principal is satisfied that they have established all the

material facts and relevant policies, so far as is practicable, he will notify you in writing of his decision and the reasons for it. If you are not satisfied with his/her decision you may ask for the complaint to be referred to a Complaints Panel. The Principal will aim to respond within two weeks of receiving your letter.

Stage 4: Reference to the Complaints Panel

A Panel hearing is a review of the decisions taken by the Principal. See Appendix 1 for the procedures to be followed at a hearing of the Complaints Panel.

The Panel will not consider:

- Any new areas of complaint that have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.

The Panel's task will be to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering the documents provided by both parties and any representations made by you and the Principal.

If, after establishing the facts, the Panel considers that the complaint is made out, they will uphold the complaint. If the Panel considers that the complaint is not made out, they will dismiss the complaint. They will make these decisions on the balance of probabilities.

It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, students, or parents. The Panel may make recommendations on these or any other issues to the Principal as appropriate.

Composition: the Panel will comprise a group of Board of Directors and members of the School's Advisory Board if available.

Notification: to request a hearing before the Complaints Panel please write to the PA to the Principal of Denla British School, within seven working days of the decision under Stage 3. Your request will only be considered if you have completed the procedures at Stages 1-3. Please ensure that a copy of all relevant documents and your full contact details accompany your letter to the PA to the Principal. Please state in your letter the outcome that you desire and all the grounds of your complaint. Please also send the PA to the Principal a list of the documents that you believe to be in the School's possession and wish the Panel to see. The PA to the Principal will acknowledge your request in writing within four working days.

Convening the Panel: the PA to the Principal will convene the Complaints Panel as soon as reasonably practicable but the Panel will not normally sit during half terms or school holidays. The Panel will consist of a minimum of three individuals who have no detailed prior knowledge of the

circumstances of the complaint. One member of the Panel shall be an independent member. You may ask the PA to the Principal to tell you who has been appointed to sit on the Panel.

Notice Period: as soon as reasonably practicable, the PA to the Principal will send you written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing together with brief details of the Panel members who will hear it. The hearing will normally follow the procedure set out in Schedule.

Attendance: you will be asked to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative, teacher, or friend. It is not necessary for that person to be legally qualified but if you do wish to be accompanied by a legally qualified person, acting in their professional capacity, please notify the School at least seven days before the hearing. Copies of additional documents you wish the Panel to consider should be sent to the PA to the Principal at least three clear days prior to the hearing.

Chairman: the hearing will be chaired by one member of the Panel (chosen by themselves) and will be conducted in an informal manner.

Hearing: all statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. All present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes. The PA to the Principal will be asked to take a handwritten minute of the proceedings.

Evidence: the Chairman will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.

Conduct: all those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chairman. If terminated, the original decision will stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his/her comment will be minuted.

Adjournment: the Chairman may, at his/her discretion, adjourn the hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue. This may include an adjournment to take legal advice.

Decision: after due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel will reach a decision unless a compromise is agreed beforehand. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations may be notified orally at the hearing or subsequently and shall be confirmed in writing to you by electronic mail where appropriate within seven working days. If you do not wish to receive the decision by electronic mail, a copy will be given or posted to you. The Board of Directors and the Principal will make the decisions, findings and any recommendations available for inspection on the school premises. Reasons for the decision will be provided.

Private proceeding: a hearing before the Complaints Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.

Confidentiality: A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at Stage 1 or proceed to a panel hearing. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will be supplied to parents on request. In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will normally be destroyed following each school inspection. In exceptional circumstances some details will be retained for a further period as necessary.

Appendix 1: Procedures to be followed at a Hearing of the Complaints Panel

1 Introduction

This is the procedure that will normally be followed by the Complaints Panel and is designed to ensure that all parties have the opportunity to present their views to the Panel.

2 Meeting Format

The meeting will take the form of a ‘round the table’ hearing, where all parties and the Panel are present in the same room throughout. Present in the room throughout the hearing will be:

- the Panel Members
- the PA to the Principal I. The PA to the Principal will take notes of the meeting. Any notes produced by the PA to the Principal will not be verbatim and will be the property of the School. The Chairman can authorize the release of the PA to the Principal’s notes on condition that they remain confidential;
- the parents who have made the complaint;
- any person that the parents have brought as a supporter;
- the Principal;
- any other appropriate member of staff.

Note: any witnesses called by any of the above parties may be asked to make their contribution and then leave rather than staying for the whole proceeding.

3 Typical Agenda

- 3.1 Welcome and introductions by the Chairman.
- 3.2 Parents present their complaints. Where two parents are present, it is often more helpful if one parent undertakes the responsibility of presentation and answering of questions.
- 3.3 The Panel and the Principal may ask questions of parents for clarification. Questions

should be put through the Chairman of the Panel who can intervene if she/he thinks that questions are inappropriate or are straying into cross-examination

- 3.4 The Principal puts his/her case, explaining the reasons for the decision and consideration and calling witnesses if necessary.
- 3.5 The Parents and Panel Members may ask questions of the Principal for clarification. Again questions should be put through the Chairman who can intervene as necessary.
- 3.6 The Parents are then invited to make any relevant points not yet raised.
- 3.7 When the Panel is satisfied that it has established facts sufficient to make its decision, the Chairman may bring the hearing to a close and inform the parties that they will be notified in writing of the decision, normally within seven working days.