School Complaints Procedures

Cambridge School of Bucharest

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AIMS

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

SCOPE AND EXCLUSIONS

This procedure applies primarily to complaints from parents or carers of current pupils about the school's provision, policies, decisions or conduct. The school may use the same procedure, where appropriate, for complaints from others.

Any complaint that raises a safeguarding concern, an allegation of harm, or information suggesting that a child may be at risk will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and managed under the school's safeguarding procedures. The complaints

process will not delay or interfere with any safeguarding referral, investigation or host-country process.

Staff grievances and whistleblowing concerns are dealt with under the relevant staff procedures. Admissions decisions, examination appeals and other matters for which a separate published procedure applies will normally be handled under that procedure. The school will tell the complainant if another process applies.

PRINCIPLES FOR INVESTIGATION

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

We also intend to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage.

Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.

The school expects that complaints will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises and no later than 3 months afterwards. We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

For the purposes of this procedure, a school working day is a day on which the school is open to pupils, excluding weekends, Romanian public holidays and school holidays. A complaint received during a school closure will be treated as received on the next school working day. If a published deadline cannot be met, the school will explain the reason for the delay and give the complainant a revised date.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT OUR FULFILMENT OF EARLY YEARS REQUIREMENTS

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint.

STAGES OF COMPLAINT

COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE DIRECTOR, PROPRIETOR OR GOVERNING BOARD

A complaint about the Director should be submitted in writing to the proprietor or, where appropriate, the Chair of the Governing Board via the School Office. The Director will take no part in investigating or determining the complaint. The complaint will be acknowledged within 2 school working days and a written outcome will normally be provided within 10 school working

days of receipt. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a Stage 3 panel hearing within 5 school working days of the written outcome.

A complaint about an individual proprietor or a member of the Governing Board should be submitted to the Chair of the Governing Board, or to another person with no prior involvement where the Chair has a conflict of interest. A complaint about the Chair, the proprietor as a whole, or the Governing Board as a whole should be sent to the School Office, which will arrange for the complaint to be considered by a suitably independent person or panel. No person who is the subject of the complaint, or who has been directly involved in the matters complained about, will investigate or determine it.

Where a complaint under this section proceeds to a panel hearing, the requirements set out at Stage 3 apply, including the requirement for at least one panel member to be independent of the management and running of the school.

STAGE 1: INFORMAL

The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue. The school will acknowledge the concern within 2 school working days and will normally complete Stage 1 within 10 school working days.

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member Head of School, Deputy Director, or the Director as appropriate, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the school office.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and the Head of School or the Deputy Director, as appropriate.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

STAGE 2: FORMAL

INFORM THE DIRECTOR IN WRITING

This letter should provide details such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint. The school will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint within 2 school working days.

The Director (or designated Head of School) will call a meeting to clarify concerns, and seek a resolution. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting, and should inform the school of the identity of their companion in advance.

In certain circumstances, the school may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, the school will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

The Director (or other person appointed by the Director for this purpose) will then conduct an investigation. The written conclusion of the investigation will normally be sent to the complainant within 10 school working days of receipt of the formal complaint.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the proprietor in writing within 5 school working days of receiving the written outcome.

INFORM THE PROPRIETOR IN WRITING

This letter should set out the details of the complaint including evidence as set out above. The complainant should also specify what they feel would resolve the complaint, and how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently. The school will acknowledge receipt within 2 school working days.

The written conclusion of this investigation will normally be sent to the complainant within 10 school working days of receipt of the request for review.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the proprietor in writing within 5 school working days of receiving the written outcome.

STAGE 3: SUBMIT THE COMPLAINT TO THE REVIEW PANEL

Complaints will be escalated to the panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second, formal, stage.

The school will acknowledge a request for a panel hearing within 2 school working days. The panel will normally be convened within 20 school working days of receiving the request.

The panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and must consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least 1 panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school. The independent member must be outside the school's workforce, must not be a member of the Governing Board or proprietorial body, and must not otherwise be involved in the management of the school or have a connection that could reasonably call their independence into question.

The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint’s progress.

The complainant will be given reasonable notice of the date of the review panel. The school will make reasonable efforts to arrange a date and time that enables the complainant to attend. If the complainant does not attend after reasonable efforts have been made to facilitate attendance, the panel may proceed in their absence, provided the complainant has had a reasonable opportunity to submit written evidence. The complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions for the panel.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The panel must then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide a copy of the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the proprietor and director.

The school will inform those involved of the panel's findings and recommendations in writing within 10 school working days of the hearing.

PERSISTENT COMPLAINTS

Where a complainant tries to re-open the issue with the school after the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted and the school has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint the school will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.

If the complainant subsequently contacts the school again about the same issue, the school can choose not to respond. The normal circumstance in which we will not respond is if:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs, *and*
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any), *and*
- The complainant is contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time

However, this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

The school will be most likely to choose not to respond if:

We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience, and/or

The individual's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive, and/or

The individual makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, school staff

Unreasonable behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening may constitute an unreasonably persistent complaint.

Once the school has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, the complainant will be informed in writing, either by letter or email.

The school will ensure when making this decision that complainants making any new complaint are heard, and that the school acts reasonably.

RECORD-KEEPING

The school will keep a central written record of complaints. For each formal complaint, the record will include the date received, the nature of the complaint, the stage reached, whether it was resolved following the formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing, the final outcome, and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint regardless of whether it was

upheld. The record will also include relevant correspondence, meeting notes and decisions, together with any lessons or follow-up actions identified.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential and access will be limited to those who need the information to manage, investigate, review or oversee the complaint.

Complaint information will be handled in accordance with applicable Romanian law, EU GDPR and the school's Data Protection Policy. Records will only be disclosed where access is permitted or required by host-country law, including where access is lawfully required for safeguarding, a BSO inspection or another authorised regulatory or inspection purpose.

Complaint records will be retained in accordance with the school's Records Retention Schedule and applicable Romanian and EU data protection requirements. Records connected with safeguarding, employment matters, litigation or another process may be retained for a different period where required by the retention schedule or applicable law.

LEARNING LESSONS

The proprietor will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Director where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The proprietor will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The proprietor will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues.

The central complaints register is managed by the Heads of School, Deputy Director and Director. It will be reviewed by the proprietor at least annually to identify patterns, recurring issues and whether agreed follow-up actions have been completed.

This policy will be reviewed by Director and proprietor every academic year.

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS IN THE PREVIOUS ACADEMIC YEAR

Stage 1	38
Stage 2	9
Stage 3	0

PARENT COMPLAINT FORM

PERSONAL DETAILS:

Title:	**First Name:**	**Family Name:**
Street Address:		
Sector:		**Postal Code:**
Telephone:		**Mobile:**

Email:

STUDENT DETAILS:

First Name:	**Family Name:**
Year Level:	

Who have you contacted previously about your complaint?

COMPLAINT DETAILS:

Please provide an outline of your complaint. Include relevant dates / detail of phone conversations or meetings / any explanations that you think are important. Attach extra pages as required (including copies of other documents relevant to your complaint).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

Date:	**Signature:**

How do you think this issue can be resolved?