

Kellett School; The British International School in Hong Kong

## Policy for COMPLAINTS BY PARENTS

### Aims

1. To inform all stakeholders on the complaints procedure at Kellett School.
2. To provide supplementary information for parents

### Policy Statement

Kellett School prides itself on the quality of the teaching, pastoral care and administrative support provided to its students. Occasionally, however, parents may have a complaint about a matter of School policy or administration. This Policy sets out the way in which parents are asked to communicate any such complaint and how they can expect it to be dealt with by the School. (Please note that this Policy document does not apply to decisions to permanently exclude or remove a student.)

### Guidance

1. A complaint is an expression of concern about a real or perceived problem where, for example, a parent thinks that the School has:
  - a. done something wrong
  - b. failed to do something it should have done; or
  - c. acted unfairly.

A complaint may concern the School as a whole, a specific department in the School or an individual member of staff.

2. All complaints will be taken seriously and handled sensitively. No pupil or parent will be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

If you are in any doubt about whether to make a complaint, please do in the first instance contact either your child's Class Teacher or Phase Leader (in the Prep School) or Head of House or Tutor (in the Senior School). (This person is referred to below as the "first point of contact" or "FPC".)

3. A written record of all formal complaints will be kept by the School.
4. Stage 1. Procedure for handling complaints made by parents – **Informal resolution**
  - a. It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
  - b. Parents are asked in the normal course to get to touch with their child's FPC, although all members of staff are encouraged to deal openly and constructively with a parental concern that lies within their area of responsibility. It is hoped that in many cases the matter will be resolved straightaway to the parents' satisfaction.
  - c. If the person contacted initially is unable to resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the most appropriate senior member of staff. In the case of a complaint being made to a member of staff that lies outside their remit, they will refer it to the appropriate person, having informed the parents that they will be doing so.

- d. Members of staff receiving a complaint are expected to notify the relevant Head of School, wherever possible, prior to taking action and the Head of School will share serious complaints with the Principal who in turn will notify the Chair of Governors. A complaint against the Principal should be made direct to the Chair of Governors.
- e. Complaints will be acknowledged as soon as practicable and, at the latest, within 7 working days. Parents will be told how it is proposed to deal with the complaint and, if a more detailed response is needed, by what date it will be sent.
- f. After a complaint has been lodged, it will be investigated through discussions with the relevant department or member of staff about whom the complaint has been raised. Following investigation, the action plan will be explained to the parents and implemented. The results will be reviewed after an appropriate interval.
- g. Should the matter not be resolved through a satisfactory action plan within 3 working weeks or in the event that the first contact person and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

5. Stage 2. Procedure for handling complaints made by parents – **Formal resolution**

- a. It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved at Stage 1. However, if a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, parents should put their complaint courteously in writing to the Principal, and the formal complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days of the written complaint being received.

- b. On receipt of the written formal complaint, the following procedure will be followed:

If the Principal has not been involved at Stage 1, the Principal (or an appointed representative) will endeavour to speak to the parents within 3-5 working days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter and, after considering the complaint, attempt to reach a resolution.

If the Principal has been involved at Stage 1, the matter will be referred to the Chairman of Governors (and the parents informed that this stage has been reached), in which case the Chairman of Governors (or an appointed representative) will endeavour to speak to the parents within 5 working days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter and, after considering the complaint, attempt to reach a resolution.

- c. In circumstances where the complaint seems to the parents to have been mishandled by the Principal, the parents should write directly to the Chair of Governors.
- d. It may be necessary for the Principal/Chair of Governors to carry out further investigations, meetings and interviews to assist the resolution of the complaint.
- e. Once the Principal/Chair of Governors is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, that the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing.
- f. If, following receipt of the Principal's or the Chair's decision, the parents are

still not satisfied with the decision, they may request a meeting with the Principal or the Chair at a mutually convenient time. If, after the meeting with the Chair or the Principal, parents remain dissatisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

6. Stage 3. Procedure for handling complaints made by parents – Appeal Panel Hearing
  - a. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to a designated Governor who will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 2 working weeks. The matter will then be referred to an Appeal Panel convened to consider the complaint.
  - b. The Panel will normally consist of three people: a Governor other than the Chair, who is the Convenor; one other member of the Board (other than the Chair) and one independent advisor who is not a parent or involved in the management of the School. All of the Panel members will be appointed by the Board of Governors.
  - c. The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation is not permitted.
  - d. The parents and the Principal/Chair of Governors will be asked in advance of the meeting whether there are any papers they would like to have considered at the meeting. Such papers will be copied and distributed before the meeting. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
  - e. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, and normally within 5 working days of the meeting, the Panel will reach a decision and may also make recommendations. The Panel's findings and, if appropriate, any recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Principal, the Governors and, where relevant, the person against whom the complaint has been made
  - f. The decision of the Panel will be final.
  - g. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential and disclosed only to the School's inspectors in strict confidence or if required by law.

## APPENDIX I

### SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS

Kellett School welcomes constructive suggestions and comments from parents, and takes seriously complaints and concerns they may raise. It is the School's policy that any **complaint must be responded to as soon as practicable**. We wish to ensure that:

- Parents wanting to make a complaint know how to do so.
- We respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way.
- Parents are reassured that we listen to them and take complaints seriously.
- We take action where appropriate.

**How should I complain?** Please following the procedure set out above.

**I don't want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me.** The School is here for your child and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Please get in touch with your first point of contact, as outlined above.

**I am not sure whether to complain or not.** If, as parents, you have concerns, you are entitled to raise them. If in doubt, you should contact the School in accordance with the above procedure to discuss your concerns. This will hopefully help you to decide if you wish to make a formal complaint.

**What will happen next?** If parents have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with the above procedure.

**What happens about confidentiality?** Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. It will generally be disclosed only to the Principal and those directly involved and, in some cases (as referred to above), the Chair of Governors. It is the School's policy that complaints made by parents should not adversely affect their children, but we cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the School aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police, in which case parents would be fully informed. Information relating to specific complaints may be kept confidentially on file. Complaints will be dealt with individually and not in groups. Anonymous complaints will not normally be pursued. Action which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints will be handled confidentially within the School.