



## **Zhuhai International School Complaint Policy**

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Reviewed by: Head of School and School Board  
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### Contents:

- A. An introduction to the Complaints Policy
    - The difference between concern and complaint
    - Who can make a complaint?
    - Purposes of the complaints procedure
    - Publicizing the complaints procedure
  - B. The Complaints Procedure
    - Initiating a Complaint and Timelines
    - Expected Outcomes
    - Escalating a Complaint
  - C. Serial and Unreasonable Complaints
- Appendix 1 - Recommended Pathways to Express Concerns and Complaints  
Appendix 2 – Complaint Form

## A. An introduction to the Complaints Policy

The difference between a *concern* and a *complaint*:

A *concern* may be treated as an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.

ZIS defines a *complaint* as 'An expression of dissatisfaction about a service that requires a response.'

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to follow formal procedures. ZIS takes informal concerns seriously and commits to making every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. However, there will be occasions when complainants want to raise their concerns formally, in those cases, the formal complaints procedure will be followed.

Who can make a complaint?

Any person who has a legitimate interest in the school may make a complaint. This will include students on roll at the school irrespective of their age. Students are encouraged to voice their own concerns and complaints but are also welcome to have their voice represented by their parents or guardians. This policy also includes staff employed by the school or formerly employed by the school. This includes parents or carers of children no longer at the school and members of the public.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated. However the Head of School will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Purposes of the Complaints Procedure:

The purpose of our Complaints Procedure is to provide a comprehensive, open, transparent, fair and timely vehicle through which:

- something that may have gone wrong can be identified, acknowledged and, where necessary, put right;
- an apology may be made where appropriate;
- the school and its senior management can, where appropriate, learn from the process, making it less likely that a similar complaint will be brought in the future.

A written record will be kept of all complaints along with details of how they were resolved following a formal investigation or progression to a panel hearing.

## Publicizing the Complaints Procedure

ZIS commits to do this by:

- copies of the procedure and the complaints forms are available from the school and included in relevant handbooks,
- including the procedure and complaints forms on the school's web site, ensuring that it is easy to find online.

## Recommended Pathways to Express Concerns and Complaints – Appendix 1

### **B. The Complaints Procedure**

#### Initiating a Complaint and Timelines

1.1 The procedure for making a formal complaint requires a complainant to complete, and to submit, a Complaint Form and to do so within 90 calendar days of the issue about which they are complaining. If the complaint is received outside of term time, the calendar day timings for managing the complaint will start on the first school day after the holiday period.

1.2 The Head of School will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint form in writing within 3 school days and investigate the matter so that the complainant receives a formal written response within 10 school days. On occasion, the complaint may be too complex to investigate within this timescale and, in these circumstances, the Head of School will write to the complainant explaining why it is not possible to work within the timescales laid down and to advise when a response will be issued. The Head of School may delegate the complaint to another member of the senior leadership team, but not the decision to be taken.

1.3 If the complaint is against the Head of School, the complaint form should be sent directly to the School Board, c/o the school.

1.4 Complaints or appeals against IB programme decisions taken by the school, including internal assessment scores, should be brought first to the teacher or teachers involved. This allows for discussion and explanation of the IB programme decision taken. If the complaint remains unresolved both the complainant and the teacher or teachers are responsible for taking the complaint to the next stage of resolution involving a meeting together with the IB Coordinator and/or the Head of Section to further discuss the complaint.

In cases where a disagreement on assessment scores persists, the complaint may proceed to the final decision stage. Here, the assignment will be anonymized and its scoring blindly standardized by another teacher (or teachers) with expertise in the subject area and discussed with the class teacher to agree on the reviewed assessment score. The new score will be explained to the relevant IB Coordinator and Head of Section, and if supported, be shared with the complainant along with a written explanation for the decision. The standardized score will be assigned to the assessment task and can raise, decrease, or leave the original score unchanged.

In cases where the complaint does not involve assessment scores and when a first discussion with the teacher(s) and a second discussion with the Coordinator and/or Head of Section does not lead to resolution, the complaint is to be brought to the Head of School using the complaint form found in Appendix 2.

#### Expected Outcomes

1.5 The actions that the school may take to put matters right might involve one or more of the following:

- a review of policy or procedure
- changes to routines;
- action to remedy a health and safety concern;
- restorative work involving a pupil and a member of staff;
- risk assessment to determine the likelihood of similar problems recurring
- an apology or an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- action towards a member of staff (on the occasions that this is of a disciplinary nature, no further information will be shared, as this is a matter of employment contract law for employees and a straightforward matter of privacy for volunteers);
- a decision that no action is necessary or justified with a full explanation.

1.6 The Governing Body will not normally award financial compensation unless required to do so by virtue of legislation.

1.7 A complainant who has first discussed the issue with the Head of School may make a complaint and to do so they must use the complaint form. The complainant is asked to be brief and clear about the issue and to state what would, for them, provide a reasonable and acceptable resolution to the complaint. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the complaint form should be submitted within 90 calendar days of the issue causing complaint.

#### Escalating the Complaint

2.0 Where the complainant considers that the Head of School's formal written response does not resolve the complaint, the complainant may ask the School Board to reconsider the Head of School's response. This request is to be made within 10 school days of receiving the Head of School's response.

2.1 If the complaint is about the Head of School then the complaint form will be submitted direct to the School Board. Unless the complaint is about the Head of School, the School Board will not consider the complaint unless the Head of School has had the opportunity to seek to resolve the matter first.

2.2 The School Board will report in writing on the extent to which s/he considers the complaint is fully, or in part:

**Substantiated** - i.e. where there is sufficient evidence to uphold the complaint;

**Malicious** – i.e. where it is proven that the complainant has no case and where, also, there is evidence that the complainant deliberately

tried to deceive the school, made the complaint as part of a deliberate attempt to cause distress or otherwise acted with malice;  
**False** – i.e. where there is sufficient evidence to prove that there was not legitimate basis to the complaint, or  
**Unsubstantiated** – i.e. where there is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion.

The actions that the School Board may take to put matters right might involve one or more of the following:

- a review of policy or procedure
- changes to routines;
- action to remedy a health and safety concern;
- restorative work involving a pupil and a member of staff;
- risk assessment to determine the likelihood of similar problems recurring
- an apology or an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- action towards a member of staff (on the occasions that this is of a disciplinary nature, no further information will be shared, as this is a matter of employment contract law for employees and a straightforward matter of privacy for volunteers);
- a decision that no action is necessary or justified with a full explanation.

### **C. Serial and Unreasonable Complaints**

The school will never take the decision to stop responding lightly and will only do so in the following circumstances:

- Every reasonable step has been taken to address the complaint;
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and aims;
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time;
- The complainant's emails, letters or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive;
- They make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff;
- The school has reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience.

The school will not stop responding just because the complainant is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions.

The school will act reasonably and consider any new complaint and we recognise that anybody has the right to raise a new complaint at any time.

In exceptional circumstances the school reserves the right to implement a tailored communication strategy if an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption.

For example we can:

- restrict the individual to a single point of contact via an email address;

- limit the number of times they can make contact.

Regardless of any communication strategy, the school will provide parents and carers with the information to which they are entitled.

#### Barring from school premises

In additional exceptional circumstances the Head of School may make the decision to bar an individual from entering school premises.

## Appendix 1

### Recommended Pathways to Express Concerns and Complaints

In many situations it is best to go to the person directly concerned to ensure that you gain first-hand information and achieve a quick response. If you feel you need a translator to support you in the meeting, we will provide one for you (as long as we have a person on staff who can speak the language in question).

For **Safeguarding** or **Child Protection** concerns and complaints, report to the Child Protection Officer (Dr. Lana Staton [alannas@zischina.com](mailto:alannas@zischina.com) 2021-22) or the Head of School.

Follow this guide to help you decide who to contact.

#### **Grade Level / Homeroom Teacher**

- Class requirements, expectations, assessments, homework
- Student behaviour
- General student progress, assessment scores, and reports
- Student learning/emotional/social needs

#### **Subject Teacher**

- Subject-specific expectations, assessments, homework
- Subject-specific student assessment results, progress, and reports
- Questions about subject-specific field trips

#### **PE Teacher**

- GISES or Pearl River Conference sport

#### **Curriculum Coordinators**

- Questions about the Primary Years Programme (up to Year 6)
- Questions about Middle Years Programme (Year 7 to Year 11)
- Questions about the Diploma Programme (Year 12 & 13)
- Overall student progress
- Questions relating to IB assessment, examinations, and results

#### **Head of Early Years and Primary/Secondary**

- Overall student welfare and behaviour
- Overall student performance
- Program questions

#### **Heads of Section and Counselors**

- Special Educational Needs
- English as an Acquired Language programs
- Student welfare (social/emotional/behavioural concerns)
- Access to outside support like counselling, educational psychologists, etc.
- BridgeU/College Counselling

#### **Head of School**

- Whole school issues
- Friends of ZIS
- Operational Issues

**School Office** – General Inquiries: [studentservices@zischina.com](mailto:studentservices@zischina.com)

For specific inquiries, contact the relevant staff (see enclosed list)

- Admissions and Special Events

- Booking meetings, translation
- Visa advice
- Absences (school or bus)
- Uniform
- Documentation request

## Appendix 2

### Zhuhai International School – Complaint Form

#### Section A: Your Details

Title:

Surname:

Forename:

Home Tel No:

Mobile Tel No:

Email Address:

Address:

How would you prefer us to contact you?

#### Section B: Your Complaint

Please give us details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it (please use a continuation sheet as necessary)

What would constitute a satisfactory resolution of your complaint?