BRITANNICA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, SHANGHAI

**Concerns and Complaints Policy**

**Reviewed July 2026**

## General Guidelines and Principles

Britannica International School, Shanghai prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. However, if parents do have a concern or complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure.

Any matter about which a parent of a student is unhappy and seeks action by the school is a complaint. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Complainants will not suffer as a result of a complaint.

## Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally by discussion with staff at the school; more difficult or complex concerns may take more than one discussion.

If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child´s Class/ Form Teacher. In most cases (except during the school holiday periods) the Class Teacher will meet/speak to the parents concerned, normally within two days of receiving a complaint to discuss the matter. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents´ satisfaction. If the Class/ Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult their Line Manager and involve her/him in the matter.

Should the matter not be resolved within 10 days or in the event that the Class/ Form Teacher and parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

## Stage 2A – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head of Primary / Secondary. The complaint will be acknowledged normally within two working days of receipt. The Head of Primary/Secondary will carry out an investigation and respond to the complainant normally within 14 days following the acknowledgement.

The Head of Primary / Secondary may request to meet the complainant to gain further information relevant to the complaint. Statements from witnesses will be collected where necessary. When all the relevant facts have been established, the s/he may either call a meeting with the complainant and provide a verbal response, or produce a written response to the complainant, as considered appropriate.

The Head of Primary/Secondary will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and consult with the Principal regarding future actions.
If the complaint is not resolved, the complainant will be given the option to move to Stage 2B.

## Stage 2B - Final Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved at the formal stage, by the Head of Primary / Secondary, then this should be forwarded to the Principal, in writing from both the complainant and the Head of Primary/Secondary. The complainant will be contacted by the Principal's PA within 24 hours of receiving the notice, in order to arrange a meeting with the Principal.

The meeting should be held as soon as practicable and convenient to both the complainant and the Principal in order to try to establish a solution. All written reports must be forwarded to the Principal at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. NB Until this is attended to, the meeting cannot take place.

After the meeting, and within 48 hours, the Principal will give his written final resolution to the matter.

If the complainant is still not satisfied with the final decision s/he can choose to move to Stage 3.

### Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If parents are not satisfied with the response to the complaint arising from the former two stages, parents should write to:

Director of Education (DoE) Ariston Education michael@orbital.education

The DoE will acknowledge the receipt of the complaint normally within five working days.

A panel consisting of at least three people not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint, will be convened to hear the complaint. One of the panel members will be independent of the day-to-day management and running of the school.

The DoE will schedule a meeting with the Panel to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 28 days of receipt of the complaint.

Parents may be accompanied to this meeting by their child, and one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. Details of this person should be supplied to the DoE not later than three days prior to the hearing.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents´ complaint immediately, without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how to carry out the investigation. After due consideration of all facts, they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 working days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents, and where relevant, the person complained about, informing them of its decision, the reasons for it, and, where relevant, any recommendations. A copy of these findings and recommendations will be kept in the Official Complaints Folder in the Principal's Office and will be available for inspection by the DoE and/ or the CEO of Ariston Education.

The decision of the Panel will be final in that there will be no further right to appeal or further hearing within the School's procedure.

### Recording Complaints

A written record is kept in the Official Complaints Folder in the Principal's Office of all complaints made in writing under the formal part of this procedure. A record is held of whether the complaint has been resolved at the formal stage or proceeded to a panel hearing, and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint regardless of whether it is upheld. The school also keeps a record of informal complaints in order to enable patterns of concern to be monitored. Complaints will be kept for a minimum of three years or as long as deemed necessary.

## Confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where a body conducting an accreditation or inspection under School 162A of the 2002 Education Act requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

If the complaint is about the Principal directly, as opposed to school policy or procedures, then the DoE and the CEO of Ariston Education will be informed and the parents will be asked to send their complaint in writing to them (E mail address – see above).

We require parents to maintain the same level of confidentiality around the complaint and outcome.

## Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Director of Education on behalf of the School Board.

## Vexatious Complaints

**A. Persistent / repetitive complaints**

Where a complainant attempts to re-open the same issue with the school after the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted and/or the school has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint, the DoE or Principal will inform the complainant that the matter is closed. (In the event that the complainant wishes to escalate the concern to the final stage, beyond the school, this will trigger the next phase of the complaints procedure.)

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 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, by the Executive Principal.

The school will ensure when making this decision that complainants making any new complaints are heard, and that the school acts reasonably in line with the Complaints Policy and Procedures.

**B. Unreasonably Persistent or Vexatious Complaints**

While the school seeks to evaluate and deal with all genuine complaints diligently and fairly, there are unfortunately occasions when complaints are raised by individuals that are unmeritorious, unreasonable, excessive and, in rare circumstances, deliberately calculated to be disruptive to the School and its personnel. Such

complaints can consume significant amounts of staff time and School resources and are detrimental to all other students at the School. In order to discourage and facilitate the process of dealing with such claims, the School has a procedure to deal with Unreasonable Persistent or Vexatious Complainants, which is outlined below.

## Who is a Vexatious Complainant?

A Vexatious Complainant is a Complainant:
a) who has made two or more complaints, in any School year, which have not been resolved after Stage 3 of the Complaints procedure; or
b) which are any one or more of the following:
1. Defamatory;
2. Deliberately calculated to be detrimental to the School, its staff or other students
3. Demonstrating a complete breakdown in the confidence and trust between the Complainant and the School;
4. Made in a manner that is aggressive, harassing, intimidating, threatening or profane;
5. Made without reasonable supporting evidence;
6. Of excessive frequency with no sign of relenting;
7. Repetitious with a complaint that has previously been rejected or after receiving a final response from the Principal;
8. Seeking a remedy that is wholly unreasonable or beyond the School's authority or resources to implement;

## Who determines when a Complainant is a Vexatious Complainant?

The Principal may make a finding that the Complainant is a Vexatious Complainant at the same time as it provides a final decision in respect of any complaint at Stage 3 of the
Complaints procedure
or
The School Board, after Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure has been invoked, the Complaint remains unresolved.

## What are the consequences of being classified as a Vexatious Complainant?

While the School endeavours to consider and review any complaint based on its individual merits, if the Complainant has been classified as a Vexatious Complainant makes any further complaint(s), this may result in the School taking any of the following actions (each of which is dependent upon the specific facts of each case):
- Taking steps to bring legal action for harassment against the Vexatious Complainant (subject to appropriate legal grounds);
- Reserving the right to cease to respond to the complaints.
- Non re-admittance of the family to the school community