



**British International School**  
of Ljubljana  
an Orbital Education School



# Concerns and Complaints Policy 2023-2024



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## **1. Rationale**

The staff and management of British International School of Ljubljana (BISL) are committed to providing the best education for our students. We want them to be healthy, happy and safe and to be successful in their academic development. In order to achieve this, we fully recognise the importance of successful home-school partnerships; of establishing and maintaining good relationships with parents and the wider community.

Inevitably, there will be occasions where students or parents have concerns or complaints, and these must be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible.

This Policy should be considered in conjunction with, and with reference to:

- BISL Terms & Conditions, Caring For Each Other Statement and other policies as posted on the School's website.
- BISL Parent Handbook;
- BISL Staff Handbook, Staff Behaviour & Code of Conduct Policy and Grievance Policy;
- Personal Data Protection Act Act (ZVOP-1, 2005) and Data Protection Policy;
- Health & Safety at Work Act (ZVZD-1, 2011)

## **2. Aims**

At BISL, we believe that:

- parents have the right to address and resolve concerns relating to their children's education;
- concerns and complaints should be addressed through a clearly structured process;
- any concern or complaint must be treated sensitively and addressed fairly;
- parents or staff have a right of appeal to Orbital Education if they are not satisfied with the outcome of any complaint;
- decisions of Orbital Education are final and binding.

This Policy lays out clear guidelines for addressing concerns and resolving complaints as quickly as possible and with the least possible disruption to the operations of the school and the students' learning. It states:

- the expectations and responsibilities of those involved;
- the informal and formal procedures to be followed;
- the procedures for appealing against decisions.

## **3. Roles and Expectations**

### **3.1 School**

As a school, BISL will:

- make information about the school and its policies and procedures clearly available;
- regularly communicate to parents with news and updates;
- provide clear information about:
  - how and when concerns can be raised with the school;



- how these concerns will be addressed through the Concerns and Complaints Policy and procedures.
- how these procedures are integral within the framework of the Terms & Conditions.

### **3.2 Staff**

A member of staff who is informed of concerns or complaints should take steps to resolve these as swiftly and fairly as possible, based on his/her professional judgement and in accordance with the school's processes and the students' best interests.

S/he should:

- respond with courtesy and respect;
- respond as soon as possible, and within the next school day;
- arrange an appointment with the parent as soon as possible, within reasonable time limits, bearing in mind his/her professional commitments, the needs of the students and the nature of the complaint;
- attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the procedures set out in this Policy;
- keep the parents informed of progress towards a resolution of the concerns raised;
- make impartial decisions based on the students' best interests and grounded in professional expertise and experience;
- maintain records of concerns and complaints using the Complaint Record form;
- follow the measures to prevent threats and violence (**Appendix 3**) should the situation become abusive.

Concerns which cannot be addressed by the staff member should be passed on to the relevant SLT member and the staff member should co-operate with, and participate fully in, subsequent investigations and steps to resolve the situation.

Any concern or complaint should be treated as confidential and not discussed in public, as gossip or one-sided views can create misconceptions or have unforeseen consequences for the individuals involved and/or the decision-making process. Breaches of confidentiality may be treated as a disciplinary offence.

Staff members against whom concerns are raised or complaints are made can expect a full investigation and a fair and reasoned resolution. After completing all stages, if a staff member disagrees with the outcome, s/he may submit a written appeal to the Principal or Orbital Education.

### **3.3 Head of Section (SLT member of Head of Department)**

The Head of Section may be informed of concerns or complaints by a student, parent or member of staff and should take steps to resolve these based on his/her professional judgement and in accordance with the school's processes and the students' best interests.

S/he should:

- respond with courtesy and respect;
- respond as soon as possible, and within the next school day;
- arrange an appointment with the parent as soon as possible, within reasonable time limits, bearing in mind his/her professional commitments, the needs of the students and the nature of the complaint;



- attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the procedures set out in this Policy;
- keep the parents and relevant staff member(s) informed of progress towards a resolution of the concerns raised;
- make impartial decisions based on the students' best interests and grounded in professional expertise and experience;
- maintain records of concerns and complaints using the Complaint Record form.

Concerns which cannot be addressed by the Head of Section should be passed on to the Principal, and the Head of Section should co-operate with, and participate fully in, any subsequent formal processes to resolve the situation.

### **3.4 Principal**

The Principal may be informed of concerns or complaints by a member of staff, a Head of Section or in writing from a parent, and should take steps to resolve these based on his/her professional judgement and in accordance with the school's processes and the students' best interests.

S/he should:

- resolve concerns or complaints within formal processes as swiftly and fairly as possible.
- not pre-judge any concern or complaint, as s/he must impartially assess the circumstances and evidence from all involved parties in order to make judgements grounded in BISL and professional policies and practices.
- maintain records of concerns and complaints using the Complaint Record form;
- enable review by Orbital Education should the parent wish to appeal against the outcome of any complaint.

### **3.5 Orbital Education**

Orbital Education has the responsibility to ensure that the school has appropriate measures in place to resolve parental complaints and to advise and support the Principal in his/her decision-making to resolve a complaint.

Orbital Education also has the responsibility to hear and make judgements on any appeal against a decision or resolution to a complaint. Orbital Education must establish a panel of at least three members, one of whom must be the Chairperson, within one week (five working days) of the receipt of an appeal. This panel will communicate with the relevant parties, including the Principal, assess the statements and evidence, and either uphold or rescind the initial decision.

Orbital Education is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of the processes to resolve concerns and complaints, especially if upholding any appeal, and must give clear explanation and guidance to the Principal.

Orbital Education is responsible in the event of any complaint being raised against the Principal.

### **3.6 Students and parents**

Students or parents with concerns or complaints are responsible for bringing their concerns to the relevant Teacher, Head of Section or the Principal. Complaints raised to the Principal should be submitted in writing.

Whilst it is understood that making a complaint raises tensions, the school can still reasonably expect students and parents at all times to:



- treat all school staff with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs and well-being of students and staff in the school;
- trust in the professionalism and professional experience of educational staff and senior managers;
- understand that teaching staff are unable to meet with parents during teaching or duty commitments;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to their concerns;
- avoid aggression, verbal abuse, or any use (or threatened use) of violence towards people or property;
- not engage in public speculation or lobbying with regard to their complaint;
- accept and follow the procedures laid out in this Policy;
- understand that Terms & Conditions demand the procedures laid out in this Policy are followed when seeking refunds for withdrawal without notice.

#### **4. Informal Procedures**

The vast majority of concerns can be settled with the minimum of delay by the student or parent simply discussing the matter directly with a relevant member of staff or, if required, with the Head of Section.

Time taken to resolve any concern or complaint at the informal stage will be well spent, particularly if it means avoiding formal procedures. Every effort should be made to ensure that, wherever possible, concerns or complaints are resolved within the informal procedure, as following the formal procedures is, inevitably, a slower process which may cause further dissatisfaction.

##### **4.1 Stage 1: Teacher**

- the student or parent raises the concern with the Subject Teacher, Class Teacher or Form Tutor.  
This is almost always the best and quickest way of resolving issues;
- the parent and Teacher agree an appointment for as soon as possible, to discuss the concern in an appropriate and informed manner and without being interrupted.  
It is important to recognise that schools are busy organisations and that the Teachers' first commitment must be delivering their lessons to their students, so it may not be possible for a Teacher to see a parent immediately.  
The purpose of this meeting will be to establish the nature of the concern and to seek or plan a realistic resolution to the problem;
- should the concern be an issue which is not appropriate for anyone other than the Principal to deal with, the Teacher will refer the parent directly to the Principal;
- the Teacher will make a brief written record of the concern raised and any actions agreed on a Complaint Record form (**Appendix 2**).

##### **4.2 Stage 2: Head of Section (SLT member or Head of Department)**

If the concern is beyond the Teacher to resolve or the parent is dissatisfied with the outcome of the discussions with the Teacher, s/he should arrange an appointment with the Head of Section.



- the purpose of this meeting will be to establish the nature of the ongoing concern, what has been discussed with the Teacher so far and any actions arising from the initial meeting(s).  
The Head of Section may need to investigate what has happened since the initial meeting before s/he can assess how the concern might be resolved. In this case, it will be agreed how and within what timescale s/he will contact the parent to let him/her know the outcome of enquiries and the actions taken or planned;
- should the concern be an issue which is not appropriate for anyone other than the Principal to deal with, the Head of Section will refer the parent directly to the Principal;
- the Head of Section will make a brief written record of the concern discussed and what has been agreed;
- the Head of Section will obtain the initial Complaint Record form from the Teacher and complete the further sections from these notes OR will complete a Complaint Record form from his/her notes if the parent had gone to him/her directly;
- the Head of Section will e-mail the parent, summarising the concern, what has been agreed, and when to anticipate a response;
- the Head of Section will investigate the complaint and either resolve the complaint or set in motion the steps to reach resolution. This may involve consultation with other staff (such as the Teacher, the Principal and/or the Legal Representative) and the parent;
- the Head of Section will notify the parent, by e-mail or in person (or by telephone only if no other means is possible), of the outcome and resolution of the concern, within the deadline communicated previously.

#### **4.3 Further action**

It is hoped that most problems will be resolved through the informal process. If not, or if it is not appropriate for anyone other than the Principal to deal with a particular concern, the matter will be referred to the Principal and resolved through the formal process.

### **5. Formal Procedures**

If a concern has not been resolved through the informal process – either the concern has been beyond the Teacher and Head of Section to resolve or the parent is dissatisfied with the outcome and explanation from the Head of Section – then formal procedures must be followed.

Raising a concern to the formal level is a serious step. In consideration of future home-school relationships, everyone involved will need to work together to find a resolution to the issue and negotiate an agreement as to how this can best be achieved.

#### **5.1 Stage 3: Principal**

##### **5.1.1 Initiating formal procedures**

To start formal procedures, the parent should put their concerns in writing to the Principal. This may be as a letter, delivered to the school and clearly marked '*For the attention of the Principal*', or as an e-mail to [principal@britishschool.si](mailto:principal@britishschool.si). The letter should set out clearly:

- the concern which has previously been discussed;
- why the parent considers that the issue is still unresolved;
- an indication of what outcome the parent is seeking or expecting.



### **5.1.2 Investigation**

The Principal should immediately acknowledge receipt of the complaint but, before responding to it, must ensure that s/he understands the circumstances surrounding the matter. To do this, s/he will:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved (including obtaining the initial Parental Complaint record form from the Head of Section);
- clarify the nature of the complaint;
- identify what remains unresolved.

If the complaint involves criticism of a staff member, no action will be taken until a written statement has been obtained from him/her.

In addition to written evidence, the Principal will convene a meeting with the member of staff and the parent who has raised the complaint, in order to clarify outstanding points. This may include calling witnesses. The Principal will convene a similar meeting with staff members involved in the complaint. It may be helpful, with the agreement of all parties, for the Principal to call a joint meeting, with all parties being given the opportunity to present their case, call witnesses and ask questions.

At the above meeting(s), the Principal may also request the presence of the Head of Section and/or the school's Legal Representative.

In these meetings, the Principal will:

- probe to elucidate further information about the concern, actions taken and actions proposed;
- clarify what the various parties would consider as appropriate to resolve the situation;
- explore potential resolutions;
- maintain an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- not express any judgements unless agreed by all parties together;
- make detailed written notes of each meeting.

### **5.1.3 Decision-making**

After meeting with all parties, the Principal will

- from his/her notes, add further comments to the original Complaint Record form OR (if the parent had raised the concern to him/her directly) will complete a Complaint Record form;
- consider the evidence and desired outcomes;
- consider the various means by which the concern could be resolved

and formulate a final solution to the concern or complaint.

### **5.1.4 Feedback**

The Principal will inform all parties of the decided outcome in writing within three working days. S/he may also convene a final meeting to go through the decision and, if required, advise on the right of Appeal.

The Principal will acknowledge if the complaint is valid in whole or in part, or if the complaint has not





been substantiated and is therefore considered to be unfounded. S/he may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation;
- an apology;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better [NOTE: this is not an admission of negligence];
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur (with an explanation of any steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again);
- an undertaking to review policies in light of the complaint.

## **5.2 Orbital Education**

Whilst Orbital Education is required to ensure that the school has a robust procedure for dealing with parental concerns and complaints in place, they are not the forum for parents to approach to raise or resolve concerns: these must be raised with the school.

Orbital Education will only become directly involved if they are requested to consider an Appeal from the parent or a staff member (see **Section 7**).

## **6. Specific concerns**

### **6.1 Concerns about, or allegations of, abuse**

Allegations of abuse against a member of BISL staff must be reported to the Designated Senior Lead and the Principal immediately. Allegations of abuse against the Principal must be reported to the Designated Senior Lead and the Regional Head of Schools.

Full details about how allegations of abuse will be managed are laid out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and in the Staff Behaviour & Code of Conduct Policy, which can be found on the school's website.

### **6.2 Concerns or complaints about the Principal**

Should a parent have a complaint about the Principal, it should be addressed in writing directly to Orbital Education in the form of an e-mail to the school's designated RHoS (Regional Head of Schools) at [michael@orbital.education](mailto:michael@orbital.education), who will follow the informal procedure and, if necessary, the formal procedure.

NOTE: If a parent is unhappy with the decision the Principal has made about a complaint or that the complaint has not been resolved, this should not become a complaint about the Principal but should be dealt with through the Appeal process (see **Section 7**, below).



## **7. Right of Appeal**

If a parent or member of staff is unsatisfied with the outcome of the formal Complaints procedure, s/he has the right of appeal to Orbital Education.

Appeals must be submitted in writing to Orbital Education in the form of an e-mail to the designated RHoS at [karl@orbital.education](mailto:karl@orbital.education) within three working days of the initial decision, and will be considered jointly by at least three members of the Orbital management team.

Orbital Education will either uphold the resolution as it stands or instruct the Principal to revise the outcome. In the case of revising the outcome, Orbital Education will work with the Principal to formulate a new outcome.

The decision of Orbital Education is final and will be communicated to the parent or staff member who raised the complaint, to the Principal and, if relevant, to any staff member against whom the initial complaint was made, in writing within five working days.

All concerns should be successfully resolved by following through the various stages of the Complaints procedure. However, there may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure, including an Appeal, having been followed, the parent remains dissatisfied.

Unless there is significant new information, if the parent tries to reopen the same issue, the Principal and Orbital Education will jointly write to inform the parent that all stages of the procedure have been exhausted and the matter is considered to be closed.

## **8. Unreasonable or persistent complainants**

Unfortunately, some parents appear to believe they will achieve a specific outcome if they behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing their concerns. Such behaviours or actions will not alter the process or decisions but is upsetting for staff and will not be tolerated. Parents will be asked to refer to the expectations (**Section 3.6**, above) and may have to interact only through the Head of Section or Principal, which will slow down the process.

A persistent complainant is a parent who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or raises issues that they wrongly consider to be within the remit of the school with excessive frequency. Such behaviour is unreasonable and may be characterised by:

- actions which are repetitious, obsessive or harassing;
- excessive correspondence, e-mail or telephone contact about a concern;
- an insistence upon pursuing insubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic/unreasonable outcomes;
- an insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- lobbying or participating in public speculation amongst other parents and the wider community;
- continuing to pursue a complaint when the outcome, even after Appeal, is not satisfactory to the parent;
- continuing to pursue a complaint when the outcome is beyond the remit of the school.

Such parents will be asked to refer to the roles and expectations (**Section 3.6**, above). They will be informed that their actions take up an inordinate amount of time, which has a damaging impact on



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the school's teaching and the students' learning opportunities, and they may be requested to interact only through the Head of Section or Principal, which will slow down the process.

### **Contacting the Board**

Mr. Karl Wilkinson , Regional Head of Schools / Board member

c/o Ms. Katja Dinčič (HR Manager) British International School of Ljubljana

**Address:** Cesta 24. junija 92, 1231 Ljubljana - Črnuče, Slovenia

**Phone:** +386 40 486 548

**Email:** [katja.dincic@britishschool.si](mailto:katja.dincic@britishschool.si)



## **APPENDIX 1: Concerns and Complaints Process Flowchart**

<b><u>Informal Procedures</u></b>	<b>1</b>	Student/parent raises the concern with the Class Teacher	⇒	Teacher and parent agree actions to be taken	⇒	Class Teacher fills out the Complaint Record form
	↓	If concern is beyond Teacher to resolve OR If the Parent is dissatisfied with the outcome				↓
	<b>2</b>	Student/parent raises the concern with the Head of Section	⇒	Head of Section and parent agree actions to be taken	⇒	Head of Section adds to the Complaint Record form OR Head of Section fills out the Complaint Record form
			<b>OR</b>			
			⇒	Head of Section e-mails parent, indicating when to expect a response  Head of Section investigates concern and any actions already taken  Head of Section notifies parent of outcome and actions	⇒	Head of Section adds to the Complaint Record form
⇐	↓	If concern is beyond Head of Section to resolve OR If the Parent is dissatisfied with the outcome				↓
<b><u>Formal Procedures</u></b>	<b>3</b>	Parent puts concern in writing to Principal	⇒	Principal e-mails parent, indicating when to expect a response  Principal investigates concern and any actions already taken  This will, if required, include meetings with the parties involved  Principal notifies all parties of outcome and actions	⇒	Principal adds to the Complaint Record form
⇐	↓	If the Parent or staff member is dissatisfied with the outcome				↓
<b><u>Appeal</u></b>	<b>4</b>	Parent or staff member submits Appeal by e-mail to Orbital	⇒	Orbital investigates concern, actions taken and decision  This will include discussion with the Principal  Orbital notifies all parties of outcome: either upholding the Principal's decision or giving a new outcome.		<b>This decision is Final</b>



## **APPENDIX 2: Complaint Record Form**

*This form must be completed by any member of staff receiving a complaint,  
For Informal complaints, this should be sent to the Head of Section.  
For formal complaints, this should be sent to or completed by the Principal.*

Name of complainant:		Date complaint made:
Name of student: Relationship to student:		Class:
Nature of complaint: (summary)		
Informal procedures followed prior to starting formal procedures:		
Evidence supplied:		
Outcome and explanation: (summary, as copy of notification to parents/staff member(s) should be attached)		
Decision made by:		Date:
Date appeal submitted:	Date of appeal panel:	Appeal panel members:
Outcome of Appeal and explanation: (summary, as copy of notification to parents/staff member(s) should be attached)		



## **APPENDIX 3: Measures to Prevent Threats and Violence**

*(Annex 8 to the Health & Safety at Work Act, ZVZD-1, 2011)*

**Violence, or the threat of violence, towards any member of BISL staff, students or members of the BISL community is unacceptable.**

**In the event of any risk or act of violence or bullying, the following steps should be taken:**

1. **PLEASE STOP:** in the event of **violence (real, threatened or perceived)** by a third party, the staff member will ask the aggressor to stop the unacceptable behaviour;
2. **NOTIFY SLT:** if the unacceptable **behaviour continues**, the staff member will notify a member of the SLT or another competent person;
3. **CALL FOR HELP:** if **serious violence** is threatened or is likely, the staff member should leave the immediate area and call for support (from a colleague, the SLT or the police [telephone: 113]\*);  
if the staff member is not able to leave their working space (e.g. they are supervising – and potentially protecting – children), he/she will not oppose the aggressor. He/she will comply with the aggressor's demands but contact the SLT or the police [telephone: 113]\* as soon as possible;  
[\* To avoid confusion, staff should only call the police directly if they are alone and cannot contact the SLT. In other cases, the SLT will be responsible for calling for any police support.]  
Our working spaces are arranged in a way that would enable the police a fast and effective intervention, if necessary.
4. **DEFEND:** in the event of a **physical assault**, the staff member should fight back to defend themselves and protect children in their care, using their knowledge of self-defence in the best way they can.

All BISL staff are familiar with these measures to prevent or address threats and violence by third parties and are able to implement them.

This is confirmed by their signing of the declaration of awareness and understanding of the Risk Assessment and Safety Statement.



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**PREPARED/UPDATED BY:**

Mel Hitchcocks \_\_\_\_\_

04 / 07 / 2023

Reviewed by Karl Wilkinson , Regional Head of Schools

This Policy is to be reviewed **annually** and updated as and when changes occur.