



BRITANNICA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, SHANGHAI

Concerns and Complaints Policy

Updated September 2023

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At Britannica we understand that feedback from our parents and students is an essential part of improving our organisation – from the education we deliver to the way we communicate with you, and right through to our organisational strategy. We want to encourage parents and students to give us feedback, even when the feedback might be something you are not happy about as we can only resolve issues or concerns if we know about them.
- 1.2 Britannica aims to ensure that any concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently, quickly and at the appropriate level and resolved as soon as possible. We will try to resolve every concern or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, we will review our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances of the complaint.
- 1.3 We recognise that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment and so we need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. Parents and students should never feel that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a student or his / her opportunities at this school. This policy distinguishes between a concern or difficulty which can be resolved informally and a formal complaint which will require investigation.
- 1.4 Parent(s) / You: Includes a current parent or legal guardian.
- 1.5 Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to working days, we mean Monday to Friday, when the school is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the school's website.
- 1.6 This policy relates specifically to parents of students attending Britannica International School, Shanghai.

2.1 The School's complaints procedure has three stages:

2.2 **Stage 1** – Informal Concern: informal raising of a concern or difficulty with a member of staff orally or in writing

2.3 **Stage 2** – Formal Complaint: a formal complaint in writing to the Principal - further details of how to make a formal complaint and the relevant procedures are set out in appendix 1.

3.1 A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they were resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2.

3.2 Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where access is requested and is required in the course of a school's inspection or under other legal authority.

3.3 In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

4 Anonymous Complaints

4.1 In so far as we are able, we will manage anonymous complaints as we do any other complaint. If you are considering submitting an anonymous complaint you should be aware that there may be instances where our ability to investigate a complaint thoroughly could be hindered by a lack of information – including our ability to speak to you directly about your concerns. We will always investigate the complaint as far as we are able on the information given, however we will only feedback on the outcome of any investigation to a known parent of a student at the school. All investigations will be reported internally to the Regional Head of School for full oversight.

5 Expectations of Parents and the School

5.1 Parents/carers/members of the public who raise either informal concerns or formal complaints with the school can expect the school to: a) Ensure that the Complaints policy and this policy are available b) Respond within a reasonable time; c) Be available for consultation within reasonable time limits bearing in mind the needs of the students within the school and the nature of the complaint; d) Respond with courtesy and respect; e) Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's complaints policy, other policies and practice

5.2 The school can expect parents who wish to raise concerns with the school to: a) Treat all school staff with courtesy and respect; b) Respect the needs and well-being of students and staff in the school; c) Avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property; d) Avoid any aggression, verbal abuse or other intimidating behaviour; e) Ensure that written communications state the facts surrounding the concern without using threatening or unpleasant language. f) Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond; g) Recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time;

6 Persistent Complainants

6.1 For the purpose of this policy, a persistent complainant is a parent who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues they consider to be within the remit of the school, and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by: a) Actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious; b) Prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint; c) Uses Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably d) An insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes; e) An insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner; f) An insistence on only dealing with the Principal on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters; g) An insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the school because it is unlawful.

6.2 For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as in (a) to (g) above in such a way that they: a) Appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of school staff and/or b) Cause on-going distress to individual member(s) of school staff and/or c) Have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the school community and/or d) Are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

6.3 The School's Actions in cases of persistent or vexatious complaints or harassment:

6.3.1 In the first instance the school will communicate either in writing or verbally (confirmed with a letter) to inform the complainant that his / her behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable / unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy.

6.3.2 If the behaviour is not modified the school will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard to the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on the school community: a) Inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this section of the policy; b) Inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties; c) Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the school should be by letter only; d) In the case of physical, or verbal aggression or other forms of intimidating behaviour, take appropriate advice and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the school site; or proceed straight to a temporary ban; 5 e) Consider taking advice from the HR / Legal Services about putting in place a specific procedure for dealing with complaints from the complainant, i.e. the complainant will not be able to deal directly with the Principal but only with a third person, to be identified by the Regional Head of Schools, who will investigate, determine whether or not the concern / complaint is reasonable or vexatious and then advise the Principal accordingly.

6.3.3 In the event of extreme situations or events, the school may take the decision to move implementing one of the above steps immediately. In this situation the complainant will be informed in writing.

6.3.4 The Principal and SLT will keep the Regional Head of School informed at all times.

Appendix 1: Raising a Formal Complaint

Complaints can be raised to any member of staff

Key Contacts:

Principal

Principal@britannicashanghai.com

Vice Principal and Head of Secondary

aobrien@educator.orbital.education

Head of EYFS

msmyth@educator.orbital.education

Head of Primary

jbenson@educator.orbital.education

Regional Head of School

michael@orbital.education