



## **Complaints Policy**

### **General Principles**

Parents can raise concerns, informally by contacting their class teacher, or formally by contacting a member of SMT or the Principal. If unresolved, parents may contact The Management of Parental Communication Department within the Newton Group. If the concern is still not resolved, parents may lodge a formal complaint with the Ministry. The procedure for lodging a formal complaint is contained within this policy. This policy is available for all parents via the Parent Handbook.

### **Procedures should be as speedy as possible, consistent and fair to all concerned**

Each stage of the procedure will have known time limits. Where it is not possible to meet these, the complainant will be kept informed of progress.

### **Confidentiality**

All concerns and complaints will be treated with discretion. It will be made clear to parents that making a complaint will not result in their child being penalised. Complainants will, however, be made aware that some information must be shared with those involved so that the complaint can be investigated. Anonymous complaints will normally be disregarded unless they relate to a serious issue. The Principal with the advice of the CEO, will decide whether the gravity of an anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

### **Redress**

If the outcome of the complaint's procedure shows the school is at fault, redress will be in the form of an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid. It may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology
- An explanation
- A promise that the event complained of will not reoccur
- An undertaking to review school policies or practices in the light of the complaint

### **Staff awareness**

All staff are aware of the procedures, as potentially many will be involved with handling complaints, especially at the informal level. Staff have clear information about which staff have responsibilities so that parents do not get continually passed from one to another.

### **Support for a member of staff against whom a complaint is made**

Staff who may be questioned as part of the investigation of a complaint will be treated fairly and they will always have the opportunity to put their case. A friend or representative may accompany them at any stage.

The complaints procedure is distinct from formal disciplinary proceedings for staff, and this will need to be made clear to all concerned. However, there may be occasions when a complaint leads to a disciplinary procedure which puts the complaints process on hold. If so, the complainant should be informed of this,



without going into details, and updated regularly on further delay. After the disciplinary process is completed, it will be necessary to decide what further response to the complainant is required.

### **Record keeping**

Complaints are recorded and monitored by relevant Middle and Senior Leadership. Recording begins at the point of initial concern. An investigation and/or consultation with others in school is carried out and a subsequent report is made back to the parents.

### **A Staged Approach**

Newton British School Muraikh has adopted a staged approach to the complaints procedure as follows:

#### **Stage 1: The First Contacts**

There needs to be clarity as to the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at an early stage will reduce the number that develop into formal complaints. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away through the Class Teacher and Middle or Senior Leadership, depending upon who is approached first. Parents must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff as appropriate, without any formality, either in person, over the telephone or in writing. On occasion it may be appropriate for someone to act on behalf of a parent, and this must be taken into consideration.

It may be unclear at first whether a parent is asking a question or expressing an opinion rather than making a complaint. A parent may want a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide if they wish to take it further.

#### **Stage 2: Referral to the Principal**

At this stage it should be clear that the concern is a definite complaint and should be investigated according to school guidelines to ensure consistency and to make sure that nothing happens which could make it difficult for later stages to proceed smoothly.

In some cases, the Principal may already have been involved in looking at the matter; in other cases, it may be his first involvement, and it may be appropriate to delegate the investigation at this stage to another member of staff.

*In some cases, the Principal will have already been involved at Stage 1, or the complaint may be against them, in which cases Stage 2 should be carried out by the CEO. In other cases where the Principal has delegated the investigation at Stage 2 to another member of staff, he is advised to become involved if the parent is not satisfied, before the Stage 2 process is completed and the matter referred to the CEO or MOE.*

#### **Stage 3: Review by the CEO**

Complaints rarely reach this level, but it is important that the CEO is prepared to deal with them when necessary. At this stage, the aim will be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that sometimes it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has at least been taken seriously.



## **School Complaints Procedure**

### **Stage 1: The first contact**

- Parents are always welcome to discuss any concerns with the appropriate member of staff, who will clarify with the parents the nature of the concern and reassure them that the school wants to hear about it. The member of staff may explain to the parent how the situation happened. It can be helpful at this point to identify what sort of outcome the parent is looking for.
- If the matter is brought to the attention of the Principal, he may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage if the complaint is more serious; if the complaint is against the Principal the parents will be advised to contact the CEO.
- The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure the parents are clear about what action (if any), or monitoring of the situation has been agreed.
- Where no satisfactory solution has been found, parents will be advised that if they wish their concern to be considered further, they should contact the Principal.

### **Stage 2: Referral to the Principal for investigation**

- The Principal (or designated person) will acknowledge the complaint and will provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet him to supplement any information provided previously.
- If necessary, the Principal will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved or delegate another member of SMT to do that on his behalf. If the complaint centres on a student, the student should also be interviewed. If a complaint is against a member of staff, they must have the opportunity to present their case.
- The Principal will keep records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
- Once all the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, the Principal will then, personally or via a delegated member of SLT, produce a response to the complainant, including a full explanation of the decision and the reasons. Where appropriate, this will include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant may also be advised that should they wish to take the complaint further; they could inform the CEO.
- If the complaint is against the Principal, the CEO will carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

### **Stage 3: Review by the CEO**

- The CEO will contact the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request for her to review the complaint.
- The Principal will be asked to forward any documentation for consideration to the CEO and his findings with regards to the complaint.
- The CEO will pass her findings on to the Principal who will inform the complainant of the outcome. If the complaint is about the Principal, the CEO will contact the complainant directly with the outcome of her findings and what action will be taken.
- The school will ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the school's records.



## **Concerns and Complaints about the School**

### **Guidance Notes for Parents**

#### **If you have a concern or a complaint**

We would like you to tell us about it. We welcome your suggestions for improving our work in school. Be assured that no matter what you want to tell us, our support and respect for you and your child in school will not be affected in any way. Please tell us of your concern as soon as possible. It is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem that happened some time ago.

#### **What to do first**

Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's Class Teacher.

If you have a complaint that you feel should be looked at by a member of SMT in the first instance, you should make an appointment to see the relevant member of Middle Management to discuss the problem face to face. You can do this by ringing the school, speaking to the Reception Staff or email/write on Class Dojo to the staff member directly.

All staff will make every effort to solve your problem informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you would like the school to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view, but it will help both you and the school to understand both sides of the question. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

#### **What to do next**

If you are dissatisfied with the Teacher's initial response (or with Middle Management's initial reaction if they have been involved) you can make an appointment to see a member of Senior Management. This should be done via the Reception Staff or email/write on Class Dojo.

#### **Further Action**

The problem will normally be solved by this stage. However, if you are still not happy you may wish to speak with the Principal. If the Principal is unavailable, you need to make an appointment via the receptionist. He will meet and take details from you and if necessary, investigate the complaint on your behalf and will contact you with his findings and tell you what action has been taken. Please note that if the outcome of the complaint's procedure shows the school is at fault, redress will be in the form of an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid. You may also receive one of the following if deemed appropriate:

- An apology
- An explanation
- A promise that the event complained of will not recur
- An undertaking to review school policies or practices in the light of the complaint