



British School Quito an Orbital Education School

All our policies are developed to ensure our values are at the centre of all we do, as we work in the best interests of our pupils to ensure the best outcomes for them. All policies can be updated out with the set review cycle if advice, guidance, or new learning require it.

Excellence
Excellencia

Respect
Respeto

Responsibility
Responsibilidad

Integrity
Integridad

Compassion
Compasión

We live and learn together:

1. with **respect** and **care** for each other
2. with a **happy** and **welcoming** attitude to everyone
3. with an **active** and **determined** approach to our ambition

Complaints Policy

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Aims

The British School Quito aims to meet its obligations when responding to all complaints when they arise, in line with orbital guidance:

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair verification of the complaint
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality where possible
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair, and proportionate, in line with the principles of Ecuadorian mediation frameworks

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures stated below will be followed.

We will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will make sure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

Definitions and scope

Definitions

We define the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”
- A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”

Scope

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Roles and responsibilities

The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Be clear and concise when outlining their complaint
- Offer all evidence they have, to support their complaint
- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with the school throughout the process, from informal stage through to the end of stage 3
- respond to deadlines and communications promptly
- Treat all those involved with respect.

Stage 1 School lead

An individual will be appointed to verify and establish the facts regarding the complaint. They will:

- Review all evidence presented
- Interview all relevant parties as required
- Ensure secure storage of all written materials on the relevant SharePoint
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the principal with their findings and the evidence used to conclude the investigation
- Inform the complainant how to escalate to stage 2 complaint if agreement cannot be reached.

Stage 2 Principal

The principal will review how facts of the complaint were established and the reasons why the complainant felt the need to escalate the complaint, in doing this the principal may:

- Review all evidence presented, including any evidence not reviewed at stage 1
- Re interview relevant parties if required
- Ensure secure storage of all written materials on the relevant SharePoint
- Prepare a comprehensive report with their findings and any additional evidence used to come to their conclusions
- Inform the complainant how to escalate to stage 3 complaint if agreement cannot be reached
- Record in next monthly report to Regional Head and state:
 - A complaint was escalated to stage 2 and resolved, or
 - A complaint will be escalated to stage 3

Stage 3 Regional head of schools

- Review all details of the complaint to date
- Further verify any details that may not be clear
- Ensure everyone is treated with respect throughout
- Make sure all parties are aware of the outcome of the stage 3 review.

Principles for verification process

When verifying a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right
- What evidence is put forward to support the complaint

The outcome of the complaint will be based on the evidence gathered and the balance of probability.

Time scales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are raised out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay.

Stages of complaint

All complaints will follow the process below except for:

- A complaint against the principal will go directly to the regional Head of schools

Informal Stage

If we receive a complaint the leadership team will review the complaint and ensure the colleague with the most informed understanding of the specific problem contacts the complainant to discuss their concerns with a view to clarifying and resolving the complaint immediately.

If this does not resolve the complaint, the complainant can escalate:

Stage 1

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally it will be referred to the principal.

The principal will appoint a relevant senior member of staff to verify the complaint. This colleague will discuss the complaint with the complainant at a mutually convenient time. Through discussion, the complainant will clarify in writing if they have not already done so:

1. What exactly is the complaint about
2. All evidence they have that can be used to support the complaint
3. The preferred outcomes to the complaint sought by the complainant.

To resolve at this stage, all parties will:

1. agree an acceptable outcome, satisfactory to all parties involved within 15 working days
2. Be recorded to ensure there is no misunderstandings and there is a record of the outcome
3. The school will maintain a written copy of the complaint on their secure SharePoint and a copy will be shared with the complainant
4. The colleague managing the complaint will report to the principal the outcome of the investigation and how the complaint was resolved
5. The principal will report to regional head of schools that a stage 1 complaint was received and was resolved.

Stage 2

If the complaint cannot be resolved at stage 1 it will be referred to the principal for review. This will be done in writing by the complainant, stating their reasons for escalating the complaint

The principal will:

1. Review all evidence and paperwork related to the stage 1 complaint
2. The principal will organise any meetings required to seek clarification and if possible, resolve the complaint
3. Publish findings within 15 working days of the stage 2 complaint being received
4. Written outcome will be shared with the complainant and stored in the school secure SharePoint. The written outcome will inform the complainant that if they do not agree with the proposed outcome, they can escalate to Stage 3.

Stage 3

If the Principal is unable to resolve the concern at stage 2 to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complainant may write to the representative of the board, in our case the regional head of schools who has been delegated by the board to verify all complaints stating their reasons for escalating the complaint to stage 3.

The regional head of schools will:

1. Acknowledge the complaint and review reasons why complaint has been escalated by the complainant
2. Review evidential base used to make a decision at stage 2
3. Will organise any meetings required to seek clarification and if possible, resolve the complaint
4. Publish their findings within 25 working days of the stage 3 referral being received
5. Written outcome will be shared with the complainant and stored in the school secure SharePoint. The outcome of this review will be final.

Managing ill defined, persistent, and vexatious, complaints

We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive, threatening, or libellous.

We define unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, but not confined to situations where the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaint's verification process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure

- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be considered and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the verification proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the verification process into that complaint, where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being verified
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being verified. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email, or text), as it could delay the verification process

Whenever possible, the investigating officer, Principal will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the principal will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. If the behaviour does not change the school will cut contact with the complainant

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring a complainant from the school.

Appendix 1. The process.

