

GIS Complaint Resolution Policy



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Mission statement

GIS's mission is to provide authentic international education to foster an enthusiasm to explore and the security to pursue individual goals. As a growth-oriented school, we aim to cultivate highly skilled and responsible global citizens rooted in our local community.

Purpose

Gjøvikregionen International School recognizes the importance of regular interaction among members of the school community. The school is committed to meeting the needs of the various stakeholders as appropriate. However, we recognize there may be situations when complaints arise. The goal of this policy is to outline a clear procedure that will enable complaints to be handled promptly and effectively.

This policy has been developed with a view to guiding parents and any other members of the school community acting in a parental capacity.

Definitions

Parent – anyone who has legal custody over a student enrolled at GIS.

Complaint - any matter about which a parent is dissatisfied and seeks action by the school.

Working day - a weekday during term time when the school is open to students. The definition of working day excludes weekends and bank holidays.

Complaints may be made by telephone, email, in person or be written.

GIS will treat complaints in accordance with the three-stage procedure outlined further in this document. The school will maintain a written record of all Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints. This record will include the actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

GIS reserves the right to keep records of complaints in order to identify any patterns. The data will be kept in accordance with current data protection laws and will be made available only to authorized bodies, e.g. police or child protection services. The person handling a complaint may find it necessary to consider whether anyone else within the school needs to know about the complaint or whether the consent of another individual is required so as to address it appropriately.

Some types of complaints may raise issues that have to be dealt with in another way (other than under this policy), in which case the school will explain to the complainant why this is so and will inform them what steps will be taken.

Complaints that are made anonymously will be handled at the discretion of the school and may be considered using other procedures, depending on the nature of the complaint. For example, anonymous complaints relating to (or appearing to relate to) a child protection matter or alleged criminal activity may be referred to the relevant authorities as appropriate.

Complaint resolution procedures

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

GIS is committed to resolving complaints quickly and informally, usually within five working days. If parents have a complaint, they should, in the first instance, contact their child's teacher. In most cases, the matter will be resolved at this point. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to contact the appropriate section Principal.

If the complainant is not a parent, they should address the complaint to the member of the leadership team most directly associated with the complaint. When in doubt, the complainant should address his/her complaint to the Head of School, who will advise how to proceed.

A complaint made directly to the Section Principal will normally be referred to the relevant teacher unless the Section Principal deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

The Section Principal/teacher dealing with the complaint will document the outcome in a letter or e-mail to the parent.

Most complaints will be resolved informally. In the case(s) when this does not happen, complainants will be advised that they may follow a formal procedure. GIS will provide for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with this policy.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, the complainants should put their complaint in writing to the Head of School. The Head of School will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. If the complaint is about the Head of School, the complainants should raise their concern with the Chair of the School Board.

In the event that the informal resolution of a complaint is not moving to conclusion, the Head of School may determine that the formal stage should be used to seek a resolution. In this case, the Head of School will speak to the complainants and advise that this stage is now to be used to resolve the complaint.

In most cases the Head of School will speak to the complainants concerned, normally within three working days of receiving the complaint, and will discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.]

The Head of School may need to carry out further investigations.

The Head of School will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head of School is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and complainants will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head of School will also provide a rationale for the decision.

Stage 3: Complaints Panel Hearing

If complainants seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the Chair of the School Board or his/her designee who has been appointed by the Board to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons: the Chair of the Board, a Board member and a school staff member.

Members of the Panel will not have been involved in either the complaint or in previous investigations to ensure they are impartial. The Panel members will be appointed by the Chair of the Board and will meet normally within ten working days of receiving the request to review the outcome of Stage 2.

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than two working days prior to the hearing.

Complainants will be entitled to be accompanied to the Panel hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Complainants must notify the school of the identity of their proposed companion at least two working days prior to the hearing.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately, without the need for further investigation.

Where a further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations which it shall complete normally within five working days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the complainant informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in

writing to the parents, the Head of School and where relevant, the person(s) about whom the complaint was made.

There may be rare occasions when, despite all the stages of the procedure having been followed, a parent remains dissatisfied. If the parent seeks to re-open the same issue, the school reserves the right to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed.

Timelines

Timescales for dealing with complaints may need to be extended. Where this is the case, the parents will be advised of the extension which is necessary and any reason(s) for this.

Parents and other community members are informed that they may also contact Fylkesmann in Lillehammer in order to discuss their complaint. The contact details for this body are as follows:

Statens Hus
Storgt. 170
Postboks 987
2626 Lillehammer
(+47) 61 26 60 00

Persons responsible

All school staff will be made aware of the complaints procedures and will be expected to familiarise themselves with the school's process of dealing with complaints to ensure they can be of the most assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

Monitoring and review

The school will monitor the number and type of complaints received under this procedure and the operation of the procedure in resolving those complaints.

The school will review this procedure on an annual basis to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice, and make any changes which are necessary.

References:

UK Complaints Policy and Procedure, ACS International Schools
Complaints policy and procedure, British International School of Ho Chi Minh City