



## **Saint Fatima School British Division (SFS)**

### **CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear procedure for informal and formal complaints to be made to the school by any member of the SFS community to ensure that complaints are dealt with both professionally and efficiently.

#### **Documents governing the Concerns and Complaints Policy**

This policy is governed by the guidelines presented in the [\*Equality Act\*](#) (2010) and [\*Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedure 2020\*](#) (DfE, January 2021).

#### **General Points**

SFS has been devoted to providing its students with high quality of teaching and pastoral care. However, it is recognized that from time to time a concern or complaint may be raised with the school. In such cases, SFS will treat them in compliance with the steps set out below. Parents and prospective parents have access to this policy via the school website and/or at the school reception.

We will always take concerns/complaints raised seriously, carry out a thorough investigation if needed, and reply to the person(s) raising the concern/complaint within an acceptable period of time.

#### **Who can make a complaint?**

This policy and procedure are not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person in the SFS community may make a complaint to SFS about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

#### **The difference between a concern and a complaint**

A **concern** is ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought’.

A **complaint** is ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’.

It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. If a parent/carer has difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the complaints coordinator **Ms. Rania Kyriazi** will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, **Ms. Rania Kyriazi** will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

### **Sage 1 - Informal Resolution**

SFS believes that most concerns can be resolved quickly and informally. At all times staff will listen to parents, students and other staff members’ concerns carefully and patiently.

Sometimes the concern might be communicated via email, but depending on its seriousness, the issue might be addressed face-to-face or via the phone.

If parents have a concern, they should initially contact their child’s subject/class teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away to the parent’s and teacher’s satisfaction. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to involve the respective Coordinator/Head Teacher/Principal or the School administrator.

Concerns made directly to a Coordinator/Head Teacher/Principal or the School administrator would usually be referred to the relevant teacher. However, if parents have a concern about a member of staff, they can approach the Coordinator/Head Teacher/Principal or the School administrator directly without being referred to a respective teacher/another staff member by emailing to the relevant person or calling the school to set an appointment. Individual appointments are conducted from 3.30 p.m. of a school day.

The member of staff dealing with the concern/complaint will make a **written record** of all concerns and the date on which they were received (see Appendix A).

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns/complaints formally. In this case, SFS will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this concerns and complaints procedure.

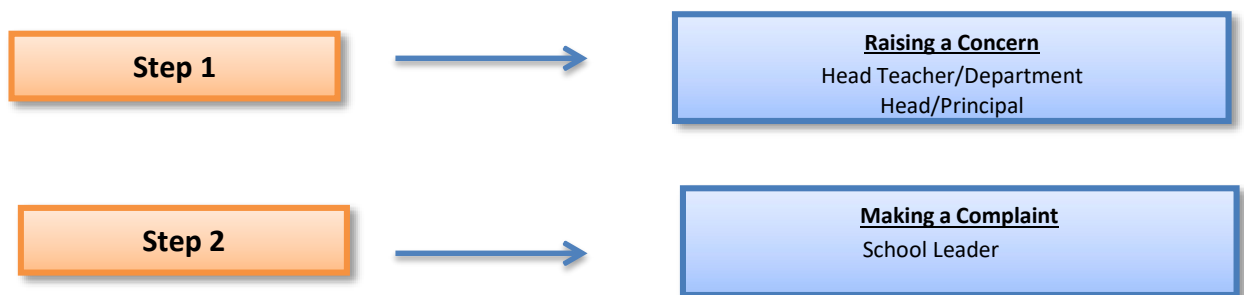
Thus, should the matter not be resolved within 15 working days or if a satisfactory resolution has not been reached via the informal **Stage 1** procedure, the parent/staff member involved (the

complainant) will be advised to proceed with their concern in writing to **Stage 2** of this procedure.

### Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

If the concern cannot be resolved on an informal basis and the complainant has already gone through **Stage 1**, the complainant would follow the escalation procedure (See ‘**Concern/Complaint Escalation Diagram**’).

#### Concern/ Complaint Escalation Diagram



### Procedure

#### Step 1: Raising a Concern

- ✓ The parent/staff member involved (the complainant) should complete the Concerns Form. This is done via LMS or by emailing to the pertinent person for the primary school, middle school, and the high school.
- ✓ The Department Head/Head Teacher/Principal should acknowledge the Concerns Form by informing the complainant of the process commencement via email or a phone call. Initial feedback from the Head Teacher/Department Head/Principal to the complainant should be given within 3 working days. A time frame for further communication regarding the final outcome should also be agreed.
- ✓ The Department Head/Principal should investigate the Concern, and communicate further with the complainant, in regards to Acknowledgement/Improvement outcome, related to your Concern, within the agreed timeframe.
- ✓ If you are satisfied with the response, the process is complete and the school pertinent Coordinator/Department Head/Principal is responsible for archiving the Concerns Form.

## Step 2: Making a Complaint

In the instance where you the complainant is dissatisfied with the response in **Step 1** and wishes to escalate the Concern to a Complaint, they will be to do so by completing the Complaints Form. This is available from the School Administrator. Once complete, a softcopy should be submitted via email to [rania.kyriazi@stfatimaschool.com](mailto:rania.kyriazi@stfatimaschool.com).

- ✓ The Complaint Form receipt will be acknowledged by informing the parent/staff member involved of the process commencement via email. Initial feedback should be submitted within 3 working days. This should be done via email also. A time frame for further communication regarding the final outcome of the Complaint should also be agreed.
- ✓ The **Complaint Form** softcopy will be forwarded to the respective Head Teacher/Department Director/Principal for resolution purposes. The respective staff members forming the resolution committee\* will be communicated with in order to arrange on a meeting to investigate the complaint. All parties referenced in the complaint are to be invited to attend the meeting for investigation purposes. The complainant is not invited to attend this meeting. The final outcome is to be approved by the School Governor. The outcome should result in either *Acknowledgement* or *Improvement* with regards to the complaint. The School administrator is responsible for completing and archiving the Complaints Form.

\*Resolution committee members are not constant. Committee members are selected by the School administrator according to the nature of each complaint.

In the unlikely event that complainant remains unsatisfied with the decision, they should proceed to **Stage 3**, where they are entitled to a hearing with a panel of the School Governors.

## Stage 3 – Board of Directors Hearing

A concern/complaint would only go to **Stage 3** if the concern/complaint had already gone through **Stages 1 and 2** and the complainant have been unhappy with the action taken or that they feel that their concerns have not been dealt with in a proper manner.

The complainant should contact the School at [rania.kyriazi@stfatimaschool.com](mailto:rania.kyriazi@stfatimaschool.com) to state that they wish to take the complaint/concern to **Stage 3**. They should send a written statement giving details of the concern/complaint and why they are not happy with the way it has been dealt



with and any outcome that has resulted. They will not be permitted to bring further new information to the hearing and so it is important that they include all necessary detail in this statement. This email will be forwarded to the School Governors and also the Principal.

A panel of three persons will be formed. The panel hearing should be held within 15 working days upon the complaint receipt. The complainant and the Principal should be invited to the hearing. The parents can request to have a friend accompany them and similarly the Principal can request to have a relevant member of staff attend the hearing. First the 3 panel members would meet to discuss the statements received by the parents and the Principal. They would then come to an initial conclusion and at the same time formulate any questions they wished to ask the parents or Principal. The parents and Principal together with a friend and relevant member of staff would be invited to meet the panel – all parties would attend together. The panel would then ask any questions it wishes to the parties involved. Both parties would then leave, and then the panel would have further discussion to finalize their conclusions and recommendations with regard to any action they feel is necessary. The school administrator would then inform both parties in writing within 3 working days. The decision of this panel will be final and so there will be no further appeals process.

The parent/staff member involved can be assured that all concerns/complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential. However, it is possible that at some time in the future external inspectors or accreditors may need to sample evidence of concerns and the school's procedures for dealing with them and will in such circumstances be given access to any evidence gathered.

### **Anonymous complaints**

SFS will not normally investigate anonymous complaints received via the "Complaints and Suggestions Box". However, the Head Teacher/Department Director/Principal, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

### **Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints**

SFS is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. Anyone has the right to raise a new complaint at any time. SFS will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behavior and will take action to protect staff from that

behavior, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines **unreasonable complaints** as ‘those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints’.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- ✓ 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 cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- ✓ refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- ✓ insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- ✓ introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or 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 investigation 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 investigation into that complaint where the school’s complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Ministry of Education in Egypt;
- ✓ seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- ✓ makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- ✓ maliciously;
- ✓ aggressively;

- ✓ using threats, intimidation or violence;
- ✓ using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- ✓ knowing it to be false;
- ✓ using falsified information;
- ✓ publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media, such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the pertinent Coordinator/Head Teacher/Principal/School administrator/School Governor will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an ‘unreasonable’ marking, including suggesting that the complainant asks a third party to act on their behalf.

If the behavior continues, the Head Teacher/School administrator will write to the complainant, explaining that their behavior is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school, causing a significant level of disruption, SFS may specify methods of communication (such as restrict the complaint to a single point of contact via an email address) and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of harassment, aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately (including the decision to stop responding) and the police informed. This may include barring an individual from school premises.

### **Barring from the School Premises**

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. SFS will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If an individual’s behavior is a cause for concern, a school can ask him/her to leave school premises. SFS will always give that person the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing. Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the School administrator. The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the person

should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place and when the decision will be reviewed, usually after 6 months.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Complainant**

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- ✓ explain the complaint in full as early as possible;
- ✓ co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint;
- ✓ respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint;
- ✓ ask for assistance as needed;
- ✓ treat all those involved in the complaint with respect;
- ✓ refrain from publicizing the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

### **Investigator**

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- ✓ providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
  - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved;
  - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint;
  - consideration of records and other relevant information;
  - analyzing information;
  - liaising with the complainant and the complaints coordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- ✓ the investigator should:
  - conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
  - keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting;
  - ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal;



- be mindful of the timescales to respond;
- prepare a comprehensive report for the Head Teacher/Principal or the complaints committee panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems;
- the Head Teacher/Principal or complaints committee panel will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

### **Complaints Coordinator**

The complaints coordinator should:

- ✓ ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- ✓ liaise with staff members, Head Teacher/Principal/School administrator/School Governor to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure;
- ✓ be aware of issues regarding: sharing third party information and additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person;
- ✓ keep records;
- ✓ set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- ✓ collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example, **Stage 1** paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale;
- ✓ notify all parties of the committee's decision.

### **Committee Panel**

The committee panel, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- ✓ both parties are asked to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting;
- ✓ the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy;
- ✓ complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person;
- ✓ the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant;

- ✓ written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the GDPR. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting;
- ✓ both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself;
- ✓ the issues are addressed;
- ✓ key findings of fact are made;
- ✓ the committee is open-minded and acts independently;
- ✓ no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.

### **Committee Member**

Committee members should be aware that:

- ✓ the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so;
- ✓ the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant; SFS recognizes that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favor. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations;
- ✓ extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting. Many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- ✓ careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated;
- ✓ the committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults;
- ✓ if the child/young person is the complainant, the committee panel should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend. However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if



- the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests;
- ✓ the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

*Prepared by QA Manager*

*Revised: August , 2022*



## Appendix A

### Concern Form

Please complete and return to \_\_\_\_\_ who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Student's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the student (if relevant):</b>
<b>Day time telephone number:</b>
<b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Please give details of your concern, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.</b>

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Concern referred to:**

**Date:**



## Appendix B

### Complaint Form

Please complete and return to \_\_\_\_\_ who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Student's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the student (if relevant):</b>
<b>Day time telephone number:</b>
<b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Please give details of your concern, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.</b>

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**  
**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**

