

# Complaints Policy

## Working in partnership: consultation, mediation and process

### 1. Introduction

The European School of Brussels II (hereafter called "The School") aims at developing a strong partnership among all the members of its school community and is committed to provide a high quality education. Communication and transparency are the cornerstones of our school ethos.

When things appear to contravene, it is crucial that a constructive dialogue be facilitated in order to clarify issues and to assure the satisfaction of pupils, parents, teachers and staff.

We believe that most **concerns** can be resolved satisfactorily and most efficiently by **informal discussion** and should initially be dealt with as close as possible to their origin.

It is imperative that parents visit the School and discuss any concern they may have. All members of the teaching personnel have a weekly consultation hour that is communicated to all members of the school community. Other appointments, including with the management of the school, can also be made through the school Secretariat.

However, if informal discussion with the person(s) or the representative(s) of the group(s) concerned does not settle the matter, a formal complaint can be made.

The most important aspect when handling complaints is the well-being and interest of pupils. The School and the parents shall do their utmost to safeguard an atmosphere of tolerance and respect where diversity is treasured as one its richest educational values.

The present document deals with **consultation and mediation** and with **formal complaints**.

### 2. Consultation and Mediation

Where **concerns** arise about the well-being and educational progress of a child at school, the pupils' legal representatives should enter into a confidential consultation process with the class teacher and/or the subject teacher about the child concerned (Article 23/24, General Rules). Direct consultation by appointment with teachers is a right provided by the General School Rules of the European Schools. Parents/ Pupils' legal representatives do not need to wait for periodic parent consultation events (Article 24, General Rules):

*"...each teacher shall indicate a time outside teaching hours when he/she will be available to see pupils' legal representatives by appointment to discuss a pupil's situation."*

At the same time, teachers are obliged by the rules of the European Schools to inform the legal representatives of a child at the earliest opportunity where they have major concerns about a pupil's educational progress or welfare.

The school expects that concerns are expressed in a respectful and confidential manner without preempting the outcome. It is in the interest of all parties to resolve concerns as quickly as possible.

Should a confidential consultation not be successful, then legal representatives should contact the Deputy Director Primary or Secondary describing the issue and the attempts to resolve it with the teacher. At this point, the relevant Deputy Director will consult with the teacher and then seek to mediate. This may entail a meeting with the teacher and the pupil's legal representatives. Such a meeting may **include the pupil and/or any other people** (e.g. care team, school psychologist, SEN coordinator....) whose presence would be considered as necessary/useful by the deputy head. The purpose of this meeting will be to review previous interventions and agree on further action in the interest of the pupil.

Where legal representatives are still unsatisfied that school management has not resolved the issue that they have brought to its attention, they should address a formal complaint according to the procedure described below under section 5.

Where there is dissatisfaction about an administrative process, efforts should be made to resolve the issue at source. Mediation should be sought via the relevant person in the management team (See paragraph 6 below) before a formal complaint is launched.

### **3. Formal complaints: Definitions**

As a school community we want to consider that a formal complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the inability of the school to resolve concerns through a process of consultation and mediation.

To the purpose of this document, "**administrative complaint**" is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with administrative policies or actions taken or a lack of action by the school management affecting an individual or a group and "**pedagogical complaint**" is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with pedagogical or educational policies or actions taken or a lack of action by an educational adviser or a teacher affecting an individual or a group.

### **4. Formal complaints: General principles**

The management reserves the rights not to accept a formal complaint unless it has evidence that all attempts at mediation and consultation have been exhausted and failed.

- (a) Who can file a complaint? Parents, students (of legal age -18 years), class representatives on behalf of a group, or The Parents Association of the European School (APEEE) on behalf of a group if the following conditions apply:
- i. if it falls within the competences of APEEE,
  - ii. if it is in the interest of the students as well as of parents, and
  - iii. if it is in line with APEEE's current policies.

- (b) Complainants shall not be disadvantaged in any way by raising a complaint. Any member of the school community may legitimately and without risking direct or indirect negative measures express dissatisfaction either as an individual or representing a group.
- (c) The School commits itself to consider and investigate carefully all complaints received in due form, and to take swift action to correct inadequate practice or behavior when deemed necessary as well as to swiftly communicate to the complainants the actions taken.
- (d) The School will not investigate or take action based on anonymous complaints or those raised on behalf of an anonymous third party.
- (e) If a complaint is found to be manifestly unjustified or inappropriate, or if the procedure is used in an improper way, the School reserves the right not to proceed with the investigation of the complaint and, if necessary, to take action against the complainant. The School shall motivate this decision and communicate it to the person(s) concerned in the delays established below (see below section 5).
- (f) Any person(s) affected by a complaint shall be informed about it as soon as possible.
- (g) A member of the APEEE may accompany parents to any meeting under the formal complaints process with the school. APEEE's role consists in following a constructive approach at all stages of the procedure, in view of arriving at mutually acceptable solutions and compromises.

## **5. Formal complaints: Procedure**

- (a) Complaints must be made in written form. Complainants shall clearly state the nature, circumstances and subject of the complaint stated using a neutral and respectful tone or word choice. The complaint should also mention the informal steps taken to solve the issue. All complaints must be properly signed and name(s) of the complainant(s) must be clearly indicated. Please use the attached complaints form.
- (b) Complaints can be presented in any of the European Schools vehicular languages (English, French or German). Where possible, they will be answered in the same language as the complaint or in any of the other working languages if this is not possible. To help the school respond to a formal complaint it would prefer that complaints are made in the school's working languages, French and English.
- (c) A complaint shall be sent by email. It will be considered as properly signed by the sender and received by the School on the sending date. A discreet school email address will be provided for this purpose (see below) and automated response given immediately.
- (d) The complaint shall receive a reference number and a file created in the "register of formal complaints".

- (e) The School will maintain the "register of formal complaints" where all files will be registered with their reference number. This register will be subject to the applicable data protection legislation. It will be made available on request to the educational authorities the School is dependent from.
- (f) Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly, and efficiently as possible. The School will make all reasonable efforts to provide a response within ten working school days from the date of the lodging of the complaint. However, if the complainant considers that the case is particularly urgent he/she can ask for an urgent response and a shorter deadline.
- (g) In the case of a lengthy investigation, the School shall inform complainants immediately via a holding reply including a short justification and will keep him/her informed of its progress.
- (h) Complaints should be lodged according to the order described in section 6. If a complainant does not receive a reply and/or a holding reply within ten working school days or the set deadline if shorter, or the reply is considered unsatisfactory, he/she is granted the right to lodge the complaint to the next level.
- (i) In case an official document is requested to complete the complaint (for example in case of an accident during a school trip), the School commits to send it immediately upon request of the persons concerned.

## **6. Complaint escalation**

*Administrative complaints* should be introduced in the order below (unless they must be addressed to a "higher" level due to their scope):

1. Deputy directors/Administrator (Deputy Director Finance & Administration)
2. Director
3. Office of the Secretary-General

*Pedagogical complaints* should be introduced in this order (unless they must be addressed to a "higher" level due to their scope):

1. Assistants to the Deputy Director
2. Deputy Directors
3. Director

4. Inspectorate (if the complaint is lodged in one area falling under the responsibilities of the national inspectors)
5. Office of the Secretary-General

### **6. Appeals**

Appeals can be lodged against very specific decisions taken by one of the organs of the European Schools (Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, Central Enrolment Authority, Director (Head Teacher) of a school, Class Council, Discipline Council, etc.). All relevant information can be found here: <http://schola-europaea.eu/cree/>.

## Informal steps taken to solve the issue

*In order for your FORMAL complaint to be receivable, have the following informal steps been taken to solve the issue? **Please tick the relevant boxes.***

### Pedagogical complaint:

| <b>Informal discussion with the person (s) or representative(s) of the group(s) concerned</b>  |  |
|--|--|
| Have you visited the school to discuss of your concern?  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>no</b> |
| If yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- During the weekly consultation hour of the teaching personnel?</li> <li>- By making an appointment, including with the Assistants to the Deputy/Deputies?</li> </ul> | <input type="checkbox"/><br><input type="checkbox"/>                   |
| An informal discussion has not settled the matter  | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| <b>Consultation and mediation</b>  |  |
| If your complaint concerns the well-being and educational progress of a child, have you had a confidential consultation with the class teacher?  | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| If this consultation was not successful, have you contacted the Deputy Director Primary or Secondary?  | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Have you had a consultation with the Deputy Director (including with other persons if applicable)  | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| School management has not resolved the issue   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |

### Administrative complaint:

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Have you tried to resolve the issue at source?     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Has mediation been sought via the Management team? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| An informal discussion has not settled the matter  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Signature</b>                                   | <b>Date:</b>             |

## EEBII Complaints Form

Administrative complaint

Pedagogical complaint

Date:

|                                |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Complainant name:              | Home phone:           |
| Address:                       | Cell phone:           |
| Email address:                 | Work phone:           |
| Name of child (if applicable): | Year (if applicable): |

### INCIDENT/COMPLAINT DESCRIPTION

Describe the situation/circumstances including place, date, time and names (if possible)

Please make sure you have thoroughly completed the previous page before sending the form to:

[WOL-COMPLAINTS@eursc.eu](mailto:WOL-COMPLAINTS@eursc.eu)

Signature: