

## Complaints Policy

### Context and Rationale

The ISM school vision and mission outline our commitment to providing an outstanding education for your children. This complaints policy is a formal process for you as a parent to request a review of school actions and decisions relating to students if you consider these to be unfair or to unduly affect students' academic development or wellbeing.

***Our mission at ISM is to provide an outstanding education for students so that they are happy, confident, independent, multilingual, and responsible global citizens.***

Our mission reflects the four core values that underpin all our work at ISM. Our complaints policy focuses particularly on the integrity of our work and the respect shown towards students, parents, and the wider ISM community.

RESPECT	INTEGRITY	LEARNING	CARING
We communicate and act with courtesy and politeness. We value what we have	We act with honesty, fairness and compassion even in the face of challenge	We are all learners who embrace challenges and strive to develop and improve	We nurture and care for the physical, emotional & social wellbeing of ourselves and others

#### The Complaints Policy applies to:

- All students enrolled at ISM
- All parents/guardians at ISM

#### And should be read and understood by:

- The Executive of ISM
- Parents or guardians of ISM students

#### Availability

This policy is made available to parents, staff, and students through the school website and upon request at any of the school's receptions.

#### Monitoring and Review:

This policy will be subject to continuous review and monitoring and will be audited by the Board Adviser. The Board of Trustees will review this policy as necessary and at least annually.

# Complaints Policy

## I. Introduction

- (i) The school is committed to providing a high quality of education and pastoral care for its students. However, if a parent (which term includes a guardian) does have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this policy.
- (ii) If a parent of a student has a complaint or a significant concern in relation to that student, the school will seek to resolve that complaint promptly, fairly and, if possible, informally. This policy will be used for that purpose.
- (iii) In this policy a complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly. It may be made about the school as a whole, a specific department or an individual member of staff. Any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the school is within the scope of this policy, except for the following:
  - a. complaints which arise from the expulsion or removal of a student. These are dealt with under the Expulsion Removal and Review Policy;
  - b. complaints arising from a safeguarding matter. These are dealt with under the Safeguarding Policy.

However, if, following an enquiry into a matter under iii a) or b) above, a parent wishes to complain about the manner of that enquiry, that complaint will then fall under this policy.

- (iv) This policy has been approved by the Director and the Board of Trustees of the ISM and is the process by which the school will handle complaints made by parents of current students. The procedures below may be adapted as necessary to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case.
- (v) Certain stages in this policy can only be carried out during term time. Where the term “working days” is used this shall mean any day that is not a Saturday or Sunday or a public holiday and which falls within the school’s term time as published on the school’s website. This means that during school holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although we will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to school life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only be permitted on an exceptional basis, and the school will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.
- (vi) If the complaint is made against the Director, the parent should make their complaint directly to the President of the Board of Trustees. The President will appoint the Board Adviser and a panel of the Board of Trustees to follow the process as set out in this policy. The President of the Board of Trustees can be contacted via the Assistant to the Board of Trustees at the address set out in paragraph 4(i) below.

## **2. Stage I – Informal Resolution**

- (i) A parent with a complaint shall wherever possible, in the first instance, contact the student's Homeroom Teacher or Head of Year/Assistant Head, who shall do everything possible to resolve the matter to the parent's satisfaction. All complaints should be recorded.
- (ii) If the Homeroom Teacher, Assistant Head, or Head of Year or is not able to resolve the matter alone, they may seek assistance from the relevant Deputy Director or the Director.
- (iii) Where a parent initially contacts a Deputy Director or the Director, they will refer the complaint to the student's Homeroom teacher unless, in the circumstances of the particular case, that member of staff decides that it is not appropriate to do so.
- (iv) The school expects that parental communications should be acknowledged in accordance with normal school practice during term time. If after 10 working days of a complaint being acknowledged a parent is not satisfied that the matter is working towards a resolution, they may proceed to stage 2 of this policy.

## **3. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

- (i) Under the Stage 2 of this policy (Formal Resolution) the parent should address the complaint, in writing, to the Director stating that it is made under Stage 2 of the school's complaints policy.
- (ii) Wherever possible the Director will contact the parent within 5 working days of receiving the complaint in order to:
  - a. discuss the matter and try to achieve an acceptable resolution or;
  - b. at the Director's discretion, confirm that the complaint will proceed directly to step (iii) below.
- (iii) Where a resolution has not been reached under paragraph (ii) a above, the Director may ask a Deputy Director who has not been involved in the matter to act as reviewer. The reviewer may request additional information from the parent and may wish to speak to them and others involved and collect other evidence as appropriate. The reviewer will report the outcome of the enquiry to the Director. At the Director's discretion this step may be dispensed with, and the Director may reach a decision on the evidence without appointing a reviewer or after examining the matter his/herself.
- (iv) The Director's decision and his/her reasons for it shall be set out in writing and sent to the parent within 10 working days of the Director contacting the parent under paragraph ii above. The Director will notify the parent as soon as possible should he/she feel more time is required to complete the information gathering process in para (iii) above.
- (v) Where a parent is still not satisfied that the matter has been resolved, they may proceed to stage 3 of this policy.

## **4. Stage 3- Panel Hearing**

- (i) A parent may proceed to Stage 3 by requesting a panel hearing and by sending details of the grounds of the complaint which they believe has not been resolved at Stage 2 to the Assistant to the Board of Trustees ([kathryn.romero@ismonaco.com](mailto:kathryn.romero@ismonaco.com)) within 10 working days of the date of the Director's decision. The letter should give full details of the matters which they believe have not been resolved and state the outcome which is sought.

The letter will be acknowledged by the Assistant to the Board of Trustees within 7 working days.

- (ii) The Assistant to the Board of Trustees shall convene a panel as soon as is reasonably practicable within 1 month of the receipt of the request to hear the grounds of complaint which the complainant believes have not been resolved. The panel shall be made up of the Board Adviser and three persons each of whom is not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Other than the Board Adviser, all members of the panel shall be drawn from the Board of Trustees. The meeting will be minuted and chaired by a Board Member or the Board Adviser. The panel will not normally sit during school holidays and thus, it may not be possible to meet this timescale outlined above. All matters relating to the panel and hearing will be strictly confidential.
- (iii) Where a parent has requested a panel hearing, the panel hearing will take place unless the parent later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. Unless such notice is given, the panel hearing will proceed whether or not the parent decides to attend. If the parent decides not to attend the panel will consider in their absence the parent's grounds for believing the complaint to be unresolved and the outcomes requested and make a determination.
- (iv) The panel may require additional material or further particulars of the grounds of complaint which the parent believes are unresolved, or any related matter, in advance of the hearing. Any such additional material or further particulars shall be supplied for consideration to all parties 5 working days before hearing. The panel may, if necessary, defer the hearing date.
- (v) A parent may attend the hearing of the panel and be accompanied by a friend or relative. Legal representation is neither necessary nor appropriate in this situation.
- (vi) The hearing will be a private proceeding and will be conducted in an informal manner. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media. All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint, and good manners. Should the behaviour become unhelpful or disrespectful, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the chair. If the hearing is terminated for this reason, the original decision will stand.
- (vii) Any parent who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and their comment will be minuted. The role of the panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints by considering the documents provided by both parties and any representations made by the parties at the hearing. The panel is not empowered to make any financial award nor impose sanctions on staff, students, or parents. At the hearing the panel will attempt to achieve a resolution.
- (viii) Where a resolution has not been reached and where the panel is satisfied that it has established all the relevant facts (if necessary having carried out further investigations) and has duly considered all that the parent and the school has said, the panel shall make its findings and recommendations (if any). If the panel considers that the complaint has been proven, it will uphold the complaint. If the panel does not consider that the complaint has been proven, it will dismiss the complaint. These decisions will be made on the balance of probabilities. The decision of the panel is final.
- (ix) The panel's findings and any recommendations (which shall be made not later than 14 days from the date of the final hearing) and its reasons for them, shall be recorded in writing and sent to the parent, the Director, the Assistant to the Board of Trustees and, where relevant, the person complained about. The decision, findings and any recommendations

will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Board of Trustees and the Director.

- (x) Where a repeated attempt is made to raise the same complaint on the same facts, after it has been considered at all three stages, the school is entitled to regard this as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

## 5. Confidentiality and Records

- (i) Every concern and complaint is treated seriously and kept confidential. All correspondence, statements and records relating to the complaint is kept confidential except where any other legal obligation prevails.
- (ii) The record of formal complaints made under this procedure must record whether the complaint has been resolved following an informal or formal procedure or whether it has proceeded to a panel hearing. It must also give details of the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints, regardless of whether the complaint has been upheld. These records shall remain for a period of [6] years.
- (iii) Details of individual complaints will be kept in accordance with the school's information and records retention policy which can be found on the school's website.
- (iv) The number of complaints registered under the formal resolution procedure in the preceding school year is reviewed annually by the Governance Committee. Any generic issues that emerge from this process will be considered by the Director and/or the Board of Trustees.

### CONTACT DETAILS:

Director: Mr Stuart Bryan  
([stuart.bryan@ismonaco.com](mailto:stuart.bryan@ismonaco.com))

Assistant to the Board: Kathryn Romero  
([kathryn.romero@ismonaco.com](mailto:kathryn.romero@ismonaco.com))

### Policy Approved by the Board on 15 March 2022

	Signed Director	Signed Chair of the Board
Date of review:		
Date of next review:		