Darul Uloom London School

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Last Reviewed: Monday, 17th February 2020
Next Review: Monday, 15th February 2021

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Stage 1 – Informal Discussion

Address with Boarding Staff/Office Staff or if appropriate relevant Head of Department

Stage 2 – Formal Written Complaint

Address with General Manager

Acknowledge – 5 School Days

Respond – 15 School Days

Stage 3 – Formal Written

Complaint Chair of Board of Trustees

Acknowledge – 5 School Days

Respond – 15 School Days

Stage 4 – Formal Written Complaint

Clerk of Board of Trustees receives request to escalate to Complaints Appeal Panel

Acknowledge – 5 School Days

Meeting arranged – 20 School Days from Receipt of request

Committee findings – within 5 days of Panel Meeting

Stage 5 – Formal Written Complaint

Secretary of State

Reviewed on Monday, 17th February 2020 by Mufti Kamil Sheikh and Mr Majeed Ullah

This policy is intended to provide Complainants with an accessible and easily understood procedure for how this school will deal with any form of complaint.

For the purpose of this policy, the general manager is the Head of Boarding and Safeguarding Lead.

The open climate of the School: The School encourages parents, along with children and staff, to voice their concerns. Usually discussion of the matter will allay or remove the worry without the need for formal procedures.

All complaints will be carefully considered. It is sometimes difficult to tell at the outset the seriousness of a complaint. Potentially serious issues may be raised in an informal and friendly way and apparently trivial issues in an adversarial manner.

Sometimes a complaint will generate a counter-complaint. It is usually helpful for there to be a discussion at an early stage about the issue, the procedures and the possible outcomes.

A clear published procedure is desirable in order to facilitate openness and to reduce the anxieties of both complainants and those complained against. It is important that the parties involved make their concerns known in a temperate fashion, by using proper channels and avoiding exaggeration and gossip.

If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. Darul Uloom London will make the complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and/or in the school office during the school day, and the School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published and/or available and the form in which it is published and/or available.

We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to "school days" we mean Monday to Friday when the school office is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website and/or informed to parents through other means e.g. letter etc.

You can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you (or your child) raises in good faith. Complainants must feel able to express their views knowing that they will be dealt with fairly and that making a complaint would not adversely affect their child.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. It is School policy to let staff know about complaints that are made about them (without always disclosing the identity of the complainant) and to encourage them to respond to this knowledge in as constructive a way as possible.

The School is not required to divulge to parents any confidential information or the identities of pupils or others who have given information which has been investigated and/or which has led to disciplinary action including the required removal of a pupil.

Any anonymous complaints will be recorded, and it will be at the General Manager's discretion as to what action is taken, if any. It is obviously not possible to provide a response to an anonymous complaint.

We will encourage Complainants to express any concerns at the earliest opportunity and through the appropriate channels listed in this procedure. We will also ask the complainant at the earliest stage what they think might resolve the issue.

All formal complaints will be made in writing. If the complainant has any communication preferences due to disability or learning difficulties the schools will allow alternative methods of contact.

STAGE 1 (INFORMAL): COMPLAINT HEARD BY STAFF MEMBER

There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight through the, boarding staff, office staff or the relevant department head (if appropriate).

If the person first contacted cannot deal with the matter immediately, the details of the complaint will be recorded (including the date, name, contact address or telephone number and the nature of the complaint) until it is possible to do so.

On certain issues, the General Manager may decide to deal with concerns directly at this stage.

If the complaint relates to the General Manager, the complainant is advised to contact the Principal.

If the complaint relates to the Principal, the complainant is advised to contact the appointed member of the board of Trustees (Abdullah Patel)

Complaints made informally to Trustees will be referred to the General Manager or to the Principal (if the complaint relates to the General Manager).

The person dealing with the complaint must make clear to the complainant what action will happen next and who will be their point of contact.

If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at Stage 1 as well as pursuing their initial complaint, a formal complaint must be made to the General Manager.

STAGE 2 (FORMAL WRITTEN): COMPLAINT TO THE GENERAL MANAGER

The General Manager (or designated Senior Staff Member) will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 5 school days of receiving the complaint. The acknowledgement will reference the Schools Complaints Procedure and confirm a date when a formal written response will be completed. This will normally be within 15 school days, but if this is not achievable an explanation of the extended date will be provided.

The General Manager (or designated Senior Staff Member) will provide an opportunity for the Complainant to meet with them to discuss the complaint in detail. The complainant may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend/relative or any representative who they may wish to speak on their behalf, and asked if they have any special requirements the school needs to be aware of e.g. wheelchair access, signing etc.

The General Manager (or designated Senior Staff Member) must keep written records of any meetings or telephone conversations held and any other relevant documentation in relation to the complaint.

Once all relevant facts have been established, the General Manager (or designated Senior Staff Member) will then produce a written response to the complainant or may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly.

A written response will include a full explanation of the decisions made and the reasons for those decisions. Where appropriate, this includes what action the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The complainant is advised that if they wish to take the complaint further, they must notify the Chair of Trustees within 4 weeks of receiving the outcome letter.

If the complaint is against the General Manager, or if the General Manager has been very closely involved at stage 1, the Chair of Trustees will consider carrying out all the Stage 2 procedures.

STAGE 3 (FORMAL WRITTEN): COMPLAINT TO THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the response of the General Manager or the complaint is about the General Manager, the Complainant must write to the Chair of Trustees to request that their complaint is considered further.

The Chair of Trustees will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 5 school days of receiving the complaint. The acknowledgement will reference the Schools Complaints Procedure and confirm a date when a formal written response will be completed. This will normally be within 15 school days, but if this is not achievable an explanation of the extended date will be provided.

The Chair of Trustees will provide an opportunity for the Complainant to meet with them to discuss the complaint in detail. The Complainant may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend/relative or any representative who they may wish to speak on their behalf, and asked if they have any special requirements the school needs to be aware of e.g. wheelchair access, signing etc.

The Chair of Trustees must keep written records of meetings or telephone conversations held and any other relevant documentation.

Once all relevant facts have been established, the Chair of Trustees will then produce a written response to the complainant or may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly.

A written response will include a full explanation of the decisions made and the reasons behind those decisions. Where appropriate, this includes what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant is advised that if they wish to take the complaint further they must write to the Clerk to the Board of Trustees giving details of the complaint and asking that it is put before the Complaints Appeal Panel.

STAGE 4 (FORMAL WRITTEN): COMPLAINT TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES COMPLAINTS APPEAL PANEL

The Clerk to the Board of Trustees will write to the Complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request within 5 School Days. The acknowledgement will inform the Complainant that the complaint is to be heard by the Panel which will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The letter will also explain that the Complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. These must be received in time for the documents to be reviewed by all the members of the Complaints Appeal Panel.

The Clerk to the Board of Trustees will ensure that the Panel hears the complaint within 20 working days of receiving the written complaint. All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint will be given to the members of the Complaints Appeal Panel. If the correspondence is extensive, the Chair of the Panel may prepare a thorough summary, to send to the panel members.

The Clerk to the Board of Trustees will write and inform the Complainant, General Manager, any relevant witnesses, and members of the Panel at least 5 working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification to the Complainant will also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a person of their choice. This letter will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and the Complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the Panel.

If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

The meeting will allow for:

1. The Complainant to explain their complaint and the General Manager to explain the school's response
2. The General Manager to question the Complainant about the complaint and the Complainant to question the General Manager and/or other members of staff about the school's response.
3. Panel members to have the opportunity to question both the Complainant and the General Manager
4. Any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair of the Complaints Appeal Panel) and all parties having the right to question all witnesses
5. Final statements by both the Complainant and the General Manager.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees Complaints Appeal Panel will explain to the Complainant and the General Manager that the panel will now consider the complaint and all the evidence presented to reach its decision, and a written response/decision (including reasons for those decisions) will be sent to both parties within 5 school days.

The Complainant, General Manager, other members of staff and witnesses will then leave.

The remit of The Complaints Appeal Panel

The Complaints Appeal Panel can:

1. Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
2. Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
3. Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
4. Recommend changes to the school’s systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

A copy of the findings and recommendations is provided to the complainant and where relevant, the person complained about

The decisions, findings and any recommendations will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Proprietor and the Head/General Manager/Principal.

Complainants have the right to request an independent panel, if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The BoT will consider the request but ultimately, the decision lies with them.

STAGE 5 (FORMAL): WRITTEN COMPLAINT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The final stage of appeal is to the Secretary of State for Education. Complainants will be advised to write to The School Complaints Unit (SCU) at:

Department for Education

2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate

Manchester

M1 2WD

What will the Department for Education do?

If a complaint has exhausted the local procedures, SCU will examine if the complaints policy and any other relevant policies were followed in accordance with the provisions set out. SCU also examines policies to determine if they adhere to education legislation. However, the department will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint. This remains the responsibility of schools.

If legislative or policy breaches are found, SCU will report them to the school and the Complainant and, where necessary, require remedial action to be taken.

RECORD KEEPING

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing and the action taken as a result of the complaint and whether the complainant was satisfied with the response. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them

COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE WELFARE OF BOARDERS

A separate procedure exists, in accordance with Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, for boarders and their parents to raise complaints, and which is made available to boarders, their parents and staff for their information. Boarders and parents can contact Ofsted and the Local Authority designated Officer regarding any complaint concerning a boarder's welfare. A written record is kept of serious complaints and their outcome, for regular review by the Head or a

senior member of staff. Complaints will be resolved either to the parents' satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils, without unreasonable delay. The complaints procedure includes details of how boarders or parents may appeal against a decision made by the school about their complaint. The procedure states that pupils will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

COMPLAINTS NOT IN SCOPE OF THE PROCEDURE

This complaints procedure covers all complaints about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides with the exceptions listed below, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures.

Exceptions	Whom to contact
▪ Admissions to school ▪ Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs ▪ School re-organisation proposals ▪ Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation	Local authority.
▪ Exclusion from school	Parents and carers may use procedures to challenge permanent exclusions and fixed term exclusions of more than 5 days in a given term. Concerns about the process followed can be raised via the complaint's procedure.
▪ Whistleblowing	▪ Schools should have an internal procedure for employees and volunteers. ▪ Ofsted may be contacted by email (whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk) telephone (03001233155) or in writing (WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.
▪ Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures	Schools must have staff grievances, discipline and conduct procedures in place. Complainants are not informed of the outcomes of actions under this procedure.
▪ Complaints about services provided by external bodies using a school's premises or facilities.	Providers should be contacted directly and have their own procedures for such eventualities.

POLICY REVIEWED BY

Mufti Kamil Sheikh (Principal)

Reviewed on Monday, 17th February 2020

Sign:

Majeed Ullah (Head of Boarding and DSL)

Reviewed on Monday, 17th February 2020

Sign: