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| <b>P O L I C Y</b>           | <b>Owner</b>        | Head of Admissions and Parent Relations |
| <b>COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT</b> | <b>ID (Version)</b> | DU/3.2.3. (v2)                          |
|                              | <b>Published</b>    | 26/11/2020                              |
|                              | <b>Valid Until</b>  | 26/11/2022                              |

## POLICY STATEMENT

The Arbor School (“Arbor”, “we” or “the school”) is committed to providing and maintaining high standards of teaching and pastoral care for its students. To that end, we welcome any feedback that will help us improve our students’ experience whilst at Arbor.

Any matter about which a parent or a guardian (“parent”, hereafter) is unhappy and seeks action by the school is considered a complaint. For the purposes of this document, the term concern and complaint will be used interchangeably.

The school recognises that it’s in everyone’s interest that all concerns are settled at the soonest conceivable stage and are:

- Given due importance and consideration;
- Handled professionally, discreetly and impartially;
- Resolved appropriately and in a timely manner, in line with applicable statutory requirements; and
- Utilised as a key driver of the school’s continual improvement.

Any concerns involving the following shall be treated as per the respective school policies:

- Child protection
- Admissions / Exclusions
- Whistleblowing
- Staff Grievance

The school will normally not investigate anonymous complaints or complaints raised collectively unless the Principal or the Board determines the case warrants an investigation.

The school reserves the right to seek legal advice or advice from the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (“KHDA”) as appropriate at any stage of this procedure.

## APPLICATION

### 1. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

We value the relationship we have with our parents and hope that if you have a concern, you feel able to come in and talk to a member of staff about it. A concern can be raised at any time, in person, in writing or by telephone. If we are not aware of an issue, we cannot begin to address it.

#### 1.1. STAGE 1 (INFORMAL RESOLUTION)

Many complaints arise from misunderstanding, or lack of communication, and they can be, where possible, resolved quickly and informally without recourse to formal procedures. Therefore, speaking to the class teacher is usually the best way to obtain a quick and effective resolution. If the class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him / her to consult a member of the leadership team, including Phase Leaders, Academic Directors, Heads of School or the Principal. To that end, we request parents to contact their child’s class teacher in the first instance, and the Head of Schools or Principal if the issue remains unresolved. Complaints made directly to a member of the leadership team or Principal will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher unless the member of the leadership team or the Principal deems it appropriate for him / her to deal with the matter personally.

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If the parent finds that they cannot address the teacher, or the issue is non-academic in nature then parents should share their concern with the member of the Parent Relations team who will then seek resolution via the appropriate member of the leadership team or the member of admin staff.

Complaints against teaching staff should be made to the Head of School. Complaints against the Academic Directors or the Head of School should be made to the Principal. Complaints against the Principal are dealt in accordance with stage 3 of this procedure.

## 1.2. STAGE 2 (FORMAL RESOLUTION)

It is hoped that most matters can be dealt with informally and that formal complaints are rare. However, if the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis and the staff member handling the complaint and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution within 5 school days, parents can raise their complaint to the Principal, using this **Complaint Form**. Parents should include details of the complaint, whether they have spoken to anybody at the school about it and if so, what remains unresolved.

The Principal will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 2 school days of receipt. After considering the complaint, he / she may decide to direct it to another member of the leadership team for investigation, depending upon the nature of the complaint. Parents will be informed who has been directed to deal with the complaint. In most cases, and where possible, the member of staff dealing with the complaint will speak to the parents concerned and keep a written record of any meetings in relation to their investigation.

Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, relevant facts have been established, a decision or conclusion will be made. Parents will be informed of the decision in writing within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. Where appropriate, the response will include any actions taken to investigate the complaint, give reason(s) for the decision and changes to school systems and procedures to prevent similar issues in the future. If the Principal is unable to meet the above deadline, he / she will provide the parents with an update and revised response date.

The Principal will report all formal complaints to the school's Executive Board ("the Board").

## 1.3. STAGE 3 (PANEL REVIEW)

If the complaint cannot be resolved in Stage 2 or the parents are still not satisfied with the outcome, they can raise their concern to the review of the Board, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered under exceptional circumstances. The Board will not review any new issues at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with Stage 1 of this procedure. This is the final stage of the procedure.

The Board Secretary will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 5 school days and will aim to schedule a panel hearing within 10 school days of receipt of a Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, he / she will provide an anticipated date and inform the parents. The panel will consist of at least 3 persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom will be independent of the management of the school. Its members shall be appointed by the Board.

If the complaint is made against a member of staff, the particulars of the complaint will be made available to the member of staff, and that member of staff will have the right to speak with the Panel.

The parents and, where applicable, the member of staff may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. Legal representation will not be appropriate.

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If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which will be completed within 10 school days of the hearing. The panel can uphold the complaint in whole or in part or dismiss the complaint in whole or in part. If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and decision will be sent in writing to the parents, the Board and, where relevant, the person who is subject of the complaint.

## 2. REGISTER OF COMPLAINTS

All formal complaints, whether they are resolved at stage 2 or proceed to stage 3 will be recorded in a confidential register stored securely in the Principal's office. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept as confidential, except where local requirements permit access. Complaints channelled through the Parents Relations team will be logged for ongoing monitoring of areas of regular concern.

## 3. COMPLAINTS RAISED DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

Any complaints raised immediately before or during school holidays will be dealt with as soon as is practically possible. During the longer winter, spring and summer holidays, it may be difficult to fully and appropriately investigate a complaint raised shortly before or during the holiday. In these cases, parents will be made aware of how the school intends to proceed.

## 4. UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR

The school aims for discussions with parents regarding concerns and complaints to be both open and constructive. In dealing with concerns and complaints, we will ensure that staff treat parents fairly and courteously, and we expect parents will do the same. In the unfortunate event of inappropriate and disruptive behaviour towards staff, the school will reserve the right to take the necessary measures in line with the school's *Security Management Policy*.

## 5. THIRD-PARTY PROVIDERS

The school will ensure that all third-party providers working within the school maintain their own robust complaints procedures and communicate the same to concerned parents.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

| Document Title                         | ID / Reference No. |
|--|--------------------|
| Security and Traffic Management Policy | DU/2.1.4.          |

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#### **ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS**

| Abbreviation / Term | Description / Definition                      |
|---------------------|---|
| Parent              | Parent or Guardian                            |
| The Board           | Executive Board                               |
| The Panel           | The Complaints Panel                          |
| KHDA                | The Knowledge and Human Development Authority |