

## Document Control Sheet

Document Title: BESA Complaints Policy

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Original	Dawn Akyurek	Board of Governors, SMT	Date Sept 2007
Revision 8	Andy Ryan	Board of Governors	Date: February 2021
Revision 9	Andy Ryan	Board of Governors	Date: January 2022

### Revision 8 Notes:

Policy was reviewed in line with DFE Guidance dated 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Only revision was to remove amendment relating to school COVID closure and update the number of complaints received during the previous academic year.





## The British Embassy School Ankara Complaints Procedure

This policy is made available to parents, children and staff (both current and prospective) on our website and on request from the school office.

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

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'and 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. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. BESA takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, you are welcome to raise it with the Headteacher. In these cases, the Headteacher may refer you to another staff member. This would usually be the member of the senior leadership team responsible for the staff member's department but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the Headteacher will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined in this complaints policy.

### **How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or senior leadership team. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance to the headteacher via the school office or email. Please mark them as private and confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as private and confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of the Governing Body, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk of the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as private and confidential.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

**Anonymous complaints**

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Chair of the Governing Body, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

**Duplicate complaints**

If a duplicate complaint is received at the end or following the complaints procedure (Eg. From a spouse, partner, grandparent) the complainant will be informed by the headteacher that BESA has already considered that complaint and the process is complete.

**Complaint Campaigns**

Where more than one complaint arises about the same issue or incident the school may choose to investigate this at any stage as a single complaint. Where this takes place, the complainants will be informed of this and provided with a joint response following the investigation.

**Time scales**

You must raise a complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will only consider complaints outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

**Complaints received outside of term time**

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first day of the next school term after the holiday period.

**Scope of this complaints procedure**

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of facilities or services by BESA, other than complaints that are dealt with under statutory procedures, including those listed below:

Exceptions	Who to contact
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance (including allegations against staff)
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff.
Staff Grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school’s internal grievance procedures.
Staff Conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school’s internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.

	Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
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If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against BESA in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint unless those legal proceedings have concluded.

### **Resolving complaints**

BESA aims to resolve complaints as early as possible in the process. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint was upheld in whole or in part at the end of the investigation process. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which the changes will be made
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- An apology

### **Withdrawal of a Complaint**

If a complainant wants to withdraw a complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

### **Procedure**

[1] **Informal Stage 1** - In most cases complaints are successfully resolved informally. Parents with complaints are encouraged to approach their child's class teacher in the first instance. The ensuing discussion, with the intervention of a senior leader if deemed necessary, has the clear aim of resolving the matter within five working days.

[2] **Formal Stage 2** - If a complaint cannot be resolved in an informal way and/or the complainant still remains dissatisfied, he/she will be asked to put their complaint to the Head Teacher in writing, stating that they wish to make a formal complaint. The letter should include their name, the nature of their complaint and the reasons why they were dissatisfied with the response to the informal complaint.

The Head Teacher will;

- a) acknowledge the letter **within two working days**
- b) Instigate an investigation, conducting this either himself or appointing an appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team, to speak to everyone involved as soon as practicable (**usually within 10 working days**). The headteacher will make the final decision regarding the outcome of the investigation.

- c) the headteacher will provide a written response outlining how the investigation was conducted and the outcome, as well as offering the complainant the opportunity to discuss the outcome if appropriate. This will normally be **within two days** of completing the investigation.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions BESA will take to resolve the complaint.

Where relevant, the written response will be provided to the person complained about.

- d) advise the complainant that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome their complaint can be considered by the Complaints Panel of the Governing Body at Formal Stage 3.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete the actions at Stage 3.

Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

### [3] **Formal Stage 3 –**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a meeting with members of the governing body’s complaints committee, comprised of at least two governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint and an individual independent of the leadership and management of the school<sup>1</sup>. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Chair of the Governing Body, via the school office, within **5 school days** of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

The Chair will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **5 school days**.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Chair will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting **within 10 school days** of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Chair will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Chair will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant’s absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

Stage 3 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. The complaints committee will consist of at least two governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Governing Body have a list of agreed individuals who have no relationship to the school but who been briefed on the content of this policy and are willing to be called upon as an independent committee member at the request of the Governing Body. Their contact details are held by the Clerk of the Governing Body.

complaint and an individual independent of the leadership and management of the school. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

*Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.*

At least **5 school days** before the meeting, the Chair will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least **3 school days** before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 2 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- 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 Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and BESA with a full explanation of their decision

and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 2 school days. These findings and recommendations will additionally be shared, where relevant, with the person complained about.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 3 will be heard by a committee independent of the leadership and management of the school determined by the British Ambassador to Turkey.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions BESA will take to resolve the complaint.

The decision of the Complaints Panel is final.

### **Record Keeping**

A written record is kept by the headteacher of all formal complaints. Records indicate at which stage the complaint was resolved and any subsequent action taken by the school, regardless of whether they are upheld.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to complaints are kept confidentially by the headteacher except where local or UK legal requirements permit access.

The findings and recommendations of all complaints will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of the Governing Body (or their delegate) and the headteacher.

**During the Academic Year 2020/21 until December 2021 the school received 4 complaints of which all were resolved informally (Stage 1).**

Andy Ryan  
Head Teacher

Written in line with guidance from DFE updated January 15<sup>th</sup> 2021 and Section 29(1) of the Education Act 2002, October 2019

Updated January 2022

Policy to be reviewed January 2023