International School Rheintal

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Updated 11/2024

International School Rheintal
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ISR Guiding Statements

International School Rheintal Vision

ISR is the school of choice in the Alpen Rheintal region providing a high quality international education in English for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, inspiring international-mindedness, academic and personal excellence and responsible engagement.

Reviewed June 2023

International School Rheintal Mission

ISR is a supportive, challenging and student-centered environment. We encourage each student to reach their potential whilst promoting international-mindedness, empathy and life-long learning. Through teamwork and individual endeavours, members of the school community should:

- Respect and take responsibility for themselves, others and the environment
- Appreciate and respect diversity
- Think critically
- Reflect thoughtfully
- Communicate effectively
- Celebrate success

Reviewed June 2023

1. Purpose

Our policy and the related procedures aim to reassure families and others with an interest in the school that:

- any complaint will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution
- the school recognises that a willingness to listen to questions and criticism and to respond positively can lead to improvements in school practice and provision for pupils
- decisions taken to resolve complaints will take account of the best interests of all concerned. The decisions on how best to run the school are the responsibility of the school's staff and, ultimately, the Director.

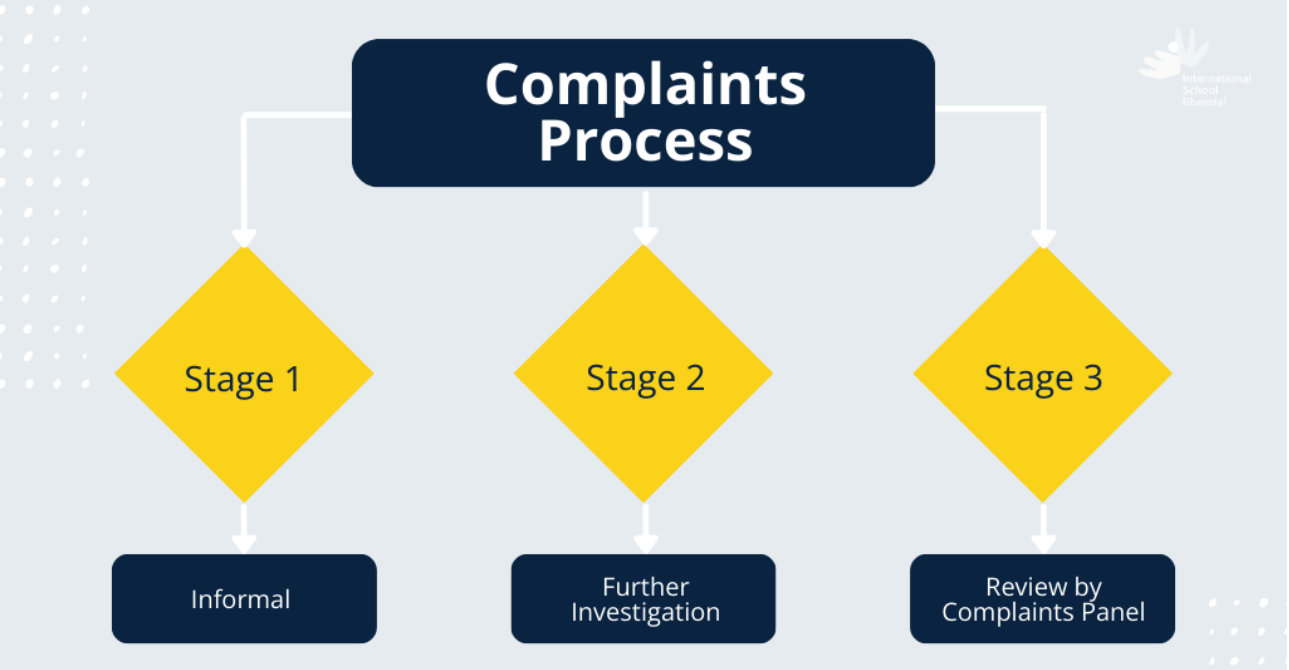
2. Scope: who is this policy for?

Complainants may be anyone with an interest in the work of the school (for example: parents; guardians; students; relatives; neighbours of the school). It is expected, however, that it will be mainly parents or guardians who will make use of the complaints procedure and this document is written with them in mind. The term 'parent' is therefore used throughout for readability, but the procedure also applies in relation to any other complainant.

Complaints may be made by telephone, e-mail, in-person or by letter. A complaint is defined as a clear statement of dissatisfaction about any specified aspect of the school's work. It is different to a "concern" as defined in the Child Protection Policy or a "whistleblowing report" as detailed in the Whistleblowing Policy.

3. Stages of the complaints procedure

There are three stages to the Complaints Procedure, one Informal Stage (Stage 1) and two subsequent Formal Stages (Stages 2 and 3).



The school's aim is to resolve complaints quickly and effectively with the most appropriate person in an informal manner at Stage 1.

We recognise, however, that parents may wish to refer a matter further. This may still be done in an informal manner at the Informal Stage. The Formal Stage, beginning with 'Stage 2 Further Investigation' provides a further structured way for parents to escalate if a parent feels the need.

There may be rare occasions when, despite all the stages of the procedure having been followed, a parent remains dissatisfied. If the parent seeks to re-open the same issue, the school reserves the right to inform him or her in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed.

The timescales of each stage are set out below. To comply with school requirements complaints must be completed within 28 days.

4. To whom should a complaint be addressed?

Unless of a particularly sensitive nature, complaints are best addressed to the person most closely connected with the matter. This usually means the Homeroom Teacher (in Primary School), the Subject Teacher or Homeroom Teacher (in Senior School) or Heads of School or by their direct line manager.

5. Stages of Complaint

Stage 1: Information stage of the complaints procedure

In the first instance, a parent may raise a concern directly with the most relevant school staff member informally. At this stage, it may be unclear whether the parent is making a complaint, seeking information or has misunderstood a situation. In any effect, the school aims to resolve the concern at this point in a timely and effective way.

If the concern is not resolved to the parent's satisfaction, however, the opportunity will be provided to discuss the matter with an appropriate more senior member of staff. The member of staff will discuss the issue with the parent and those involved in school, with the aim of resolving the complaint as soon as possible.

In the case of a complaint against a Head of School or member of the extended leadership team, this stage will always be heard directly by the Director and CEO. Formal complaints against the Director should be directed to the ISR Chair of the Board.

The parent will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and may be informed of what action, if any, the school proposes to take. Details of internal disciplinary action, or action taken with another child or family, if any, may not be provided to the complainant.

If this informal process has been exhausted and, in the opinion of the parent, no satisfactory solution has been found, the parent will be asked by the member of staff dealing with the complaint at the time whether they wish the complaint to be considered formally at Stage 2 of this procedure.

If so, the parent will be invited to put the complaint in writing to the Head of School using the School Complaint Form attached to this policy as Appendix 1. The form should be sent to the Head of School or, in the case of a complaint initially heard by or directed against the Head of School, to the Director, within five school days. If a Formal School Complaint Form is not submitted within five school days, the school may assume that the complaint has been withdrawn.

Records of informal complaints

Written records of all correspondence, conversations and meetings with parents to resolve informal complaints that have been referred to a Head of School are kept. Each Head of School (Primary; Senior) or line manager keeps a digital copy of Informal Complaints referred to them. This record is discussed with the Director at regular 1:1 meetings in order to monitor possible persistent or pervasive issues, or persistent complaints.

Stage 2: Referral for further investigation

Where another staff member has addressed the complaint at the Informal Stage, Stage 2 is referral to the Head of School as a written complaint or a request for a meeting. Where the complaint has been addressed by the Head of School at the Informal Stage, the next possible stage, Stage 2, is referred to the Director , which remains at Stage 2.

The Director or Head of School will acknowledge the written complaint or request for a meeting within two school days of receipt and provide an opportunity to meet to discuss the complaint. The Director or Head of School will investigate the complaint and a written response will normally be made within five school days of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, a letter will be sent explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised response date.

The written response will include reasons for the conclusions reached by the Director or Head of School and what action, if any, the school proposes to take to resolve the matter. Details of internal disciplinary action, or action taken with another child or family, if any, may not be provided to the complainant.

If the parent remains dissatisfied, they will be advised that, in order to progress the complaint further, they must notify the Director in writing within five school days. The Director will then ensure that the parent is offered the opportunity of taking the complaint to a Complaints Panel at Stage 3 or a further attempt at resolution by the Director at Stage 2.

Records of formal complaints

All complaints that reach Stage 2 are recorded in the Complaints Log which is kept by the Director. Parents are entitled to request to see this Complaints Policy and, for transparency, it is also published on the ISR intranet, MyISR and the ISR website. The ISR Chair of the Board may also view the Complaints Log and the wider Board will review the nature of complaints as required, and as part of its oversight role.

Stage 3: Review by a Complaints Panel

It is only on extremely rare occasions that complaints will reach this level. When the need arises, however, a Complaints Panel will consider complaints at this stage.

A written acknowledgement of the complaint and the request for it to be heard at Stage 3 will be sent to the parent by the Director within two school days. The letter will inform the parent that the complaint will be heard by a Complaints Panel within ten school days of sending the acknowledgment. It will also inform the parent of the right to submit any further documents other than the complaint form and that these must be made available to the Complaints Panel within three school days of receipt of the acknowledgement letter. The complainant does not have the right to call witnesses to the meeting, although they may be accompanied by one companion of their choice.

The Director, or Chair of the Board in the case of a complaint against the Director, will convene a Complaints Panel meeting, having consulted with all parties on convenient times. The date, time and venue for the meeting will then be confirmed no less than five school days in advance. The names of all parties to attend the meeting and relevant documents to be referred to at the meeting will also be provided by the Chair of the Complaints Panel to the parent, the Director and/or Head of School, and each panel member. This will be provided as soon as possible and, in any event, at least two school days prior to the meeting. Some items, such as video footage, will not be provided to the parent (inline with data protection measures).

The meeting will be held following the procedures for hearing a complaint detailed in Appendix 3. A written decision will be sent to the parent and the Director and/or Head of School by the Chair of the Complaints Panel within three school days of the meeting. The outcome will also be added to the Complaints Log. The letter will explain that the decision of the Complaints Panel is final and that there is no subsequent appeal process

6. IB Complaints Policy

This section specifies IB parent or legal guardian and student complaints procedures. The written procedures for how we will deal with complaints are outlined in this document. Decisions pertaining to the IB Programme, or “IB programme decisions” refer specifically to decisions made by ISR staff or its leadership teams that impact a student’s completion of, or engagement with, IB programmes and/or courses, as well as decisions that impact their preparation for further education. These include, but are not limited to:

- Withdrawal from IB Diploma due to misconduct relating to Academic Integrity (Procedures relating to Academic Integrity are addressed in the Academic Integrity Policy for IB Diploma Students.
- Accusations of students and the investigation of misconduct relating to Academic Integrity (Procedures relating to Academic Integrity are addressed in the Academic Integrity Policy for IB Diploma Students).
- Submission of internally assessed and externally assessed work to eCoursework (if a students' internally assessed work is received after a published internal school submission date, the last piece of work received by the internal school submission date can be used for submission)
- Discrepancy between teacher predicted and final moderated grades for EE, TOK and other Internally Assessed work
- Discrepancy between IB Predicted Grades for University applications and final IB results grades, resulting in student IB grades or point scores not meeting requirements for further education offers
- The non-enrolment of students as IB Diploma/course/retake candidates if they fail to make internal application deadlines
- Late fees incurred for retakes as a result of failure to meet internal application deadline dates
- The selection of courses/subjects available at ISR when students choose their IB subjects and course set
- Decisions relating to a candidate's subject pathway and placement in subjects to comprise their course set
- Requirements for students to meet attendance and academic achievement criteria and therefore be allowed to continue with the full IB Diploma
- Decisions relating to level of support provided for internally assessed work (written feedback is only provided on one draft of internally assessed work before students are expected to submit a final draft, students do not automatically get feedback on late submission of draft work).
- Declaring a student to not be in good standing with the school and therefore the non enrolment of the student as an IB Diploma/retake candidate
- Withholding IB candidate results due to non-payment of school fees
- Withholding Diploma Certificates due to non-payment of school fees
- Standard of teaching, classroom facilities and examination facilities
- Pastoral concerns (procedures relating to any pastoral matters are addressed in the ISR Code of Conduct Policy).

For all of the above complaints, the written procedures to be followed are detailed in this document above. The IB Coordinator is involved in the investigation of any student or parental complaints relating to the IB Programme.

In the event that a student or parent wishes to appeal a grade/grades awarded by the IB after the issue of results, the appeals process outlined in "General Regulations: Diploma Programme".

7. Pearson Appeals and Complaints Policy

Complaints and appeals procedure

The process for appeals and complaints regarding iGCSE Pearson EdExcel examinations follow the general principles already listed in this policy.

If a candidate (or their parent/carer) has a general concern or complaint about the centre's delivery or administration of a qualification they are following, ISR encourages them to try to resolve this informally in the first instance.

A concern or complaint should be made in person, by telephone or in writing to the head of centre (for ISR, this is the Head of Senior School).

If a complaint fails to be resolved informally, the candidate (or their parent/carer) is then at liberty to make a formal complaint.

Grounds for complaint

A candidate (or their/parent/carer) may make a complaint on the grounds below

Teaching and learning:

1. Quality of teaching and learning, for example
    a. Non-subject specialist teacher without adequate training/subject matter expertise utilised on a long-term basis
    b. Teacher lacking knowledge of new specification/incorrect core content studied/taught
    c. Core content not adequately covered
    d. Inadequate feedback for a candidate following assessment(s)
2. Pre-release/advance material/set task issued by the awarding body not provided on time to an exam candidate
3. The taking of an assessment, which contributes to the final grade of the qualification, not conducted according to the awarding body instructions

Centre assessed marking:

1. The marking of an internal assessment, which contributes to the final grade of the qualification, not undertaken according to the requirements of the awarding body
2. Candidate not informed of their centre assessed marks prior to marks being submitted to the awarding body
3. Candidate not informed of their centre assessed marks in sufficient time to request/appeal a review of marking prior to marks being submitted to the awarding body
4. Candidate not given sufficient time to review materials to make a decision whether to request a review of centre assessed marks

Access arrangements:

1. Candidate not assessed by the centre's appointed assessor
2. Candidate not involved in decisions made regarding their access arrangements
3. Candidate did not consent to personal data being shared electronically (by the non-acquisition of a signed Data Protection Notice)
4. Candidate not informed/adequately informed of the arrangements in place and the subjects or components of subjects where the arrangements would not apply
5. Exam information not appropriately adapted for a disabled candidate to access it
6. Adapted equipment put in place failed during exam/assessment
7. Approved access arrangement(s) not put in place at the time of an exam/assessment
8. Appropriate arrangements not put in place at the time of an exam/assessment as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment

Entries:

1. Candidate not entered for a required exam/assessment
2. Candidate entered for a wrong exam/assessment
3. Candidate entered for a wrong tier of entry

Conducting examinations:

1. Failure to adequately brief candidate on exam timetable/exam regulations prior to exam/assessment taking place
2. Room in which exam held did not provide candidate with appropriate conditions for taking the exam
3. Inadequate invigilation in exam room
4. Failure to conduct exam according to the regulations
5. Online or IT system failed during online/word processed exam/assessment
6. Disruption during exam/assessment
7. Alleged, suspected or actual malpractice incident not investigated/reported
8. Eligible application for special consideration for a candidate not submitted/not submitted to timescale

9. Failure to inform/update candidate on the outcome of a special consideration application

Results and Post-results:

1. Before exams, candidate not made aware of the arrangements for post-results services and the accessibility of senior members of centre staff after the publication of results
2. Candidate not having access to a member of the leadership team after the publication of results to discuss/make decision on the submission of an enquiry
3. Candidate request for return of work after moderation and work not available/disposed of earlier than allowed in the regulations
4. Candidate (or parent/carer) unhappy with a result (complainant to refer via exams officer to awarding body post-results services)
5. Candidate (or parent/carer) unhappy with a centre decision not to support a clerical check, a review of marking, a review of moderation or an appeal
6. Centre applied for the wrong post-results service/for the wrong exam paper for a candidate
7. Centre missed awarding body deadline to apply for a post-results service
8. Centre applied for a post-results service for candidate without gaining required candidate consent/permission

How to make a formal complaint and how it will be investigated

- A complaint should be submitted in writing.
- The complaint will be acknowledged within 2 working days
- The head of centre will further investigate, or appoint a member of the leadership team who is not involved in the grounds for complaint and has no personal interest in the outcome to investigate the complaint, and report on the findings and conclusion
- The result of the investigation will be communicated within 2 working weeks

How to appeal against the outcome of a formal complaint

Following the outcome, if the complainant remains dissatisfied and believes there are clear grounds, an appeal can be submitted. This follows the procedures as listed in stage 3 of the Complaints policy.

In the event that a student or parent wishes to appeal a grade/grades awarded by the awarding body after the issue of results, the appeals process outlined on the student information pages on the awarding body website (Pearson awarding body link here).

APPENDIX 1: Stage 2 formal school complaint form and log

Date	
To whom or what does the issue relate? *Brief title for the complaint*	
Complainant *Relationship to the school & contact details*	Name: Relationship: Contact Details:
How was the complaint received?	Verbally/in-person/ email/ letter/telephone call
Details of the complaint *Please be as specific and detailed as possible. Attach email/letter*	
Proposed resolution *What would you like to see done to resolve your complaint and bring the matter to an acceptable closure for yourself and the school?*	
Signed	
Please return the completed form to the Head of School or Director.	

APPENDIX 2: Complaints panel - procedures for hearing the complaint

The aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve a reconciliation between the school and the parent. The Chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting proceedings and outcome are properly recorded in writing. Although the meeting will follow the structured order below, given potential sensitivities and anxieties, the Chair will endeavour to ensure that the proceedings are as comfortable as possible and that all parties are put at ease.

Order of Meeting

1. The Chair welcomes the parent and their companion.
2. The Chair explains the purpose of the meeting, the procedure, and that all written evidence has been made available to all parties.
3. The parent explains the complaint.
4. The panel may question the parent.
5. The parent and companion leaves the meeting.
6. The Chair welcomes the Head of School (or the Director where the complaint has been addressed by the Director at Stage 2[1]).
7. The Chair explains the purpose of the meeting, the procedure, and that all written evidence has been made available to all parties.
8. The Head of School or Director presents a response to the complaint, including action taken to address the complaint at earlier stages of the procedure.
9. The panel may question the Head of School or Director. The Head of School or Director leaves the meeting. The parent, together with their companion, is invited back into the room to make a final statement, and then leaves again.
10. The Head of School or the Director is invited back into the room to make a final statement, and then leaves again.
11. The Panel considers the complaint and reaches a majority decision. The panel also decides what action (if any) to take to resolve the complaint and, if appropriate, recommends changes to ensure similar complaints are not made in future.
12. When a decision has been made, the Chair recalls the parent, then the Head of School and each is informed of the outcome and any action to be taken.
13. The decision of the Complaints Panel constitutes a judgement and there is no subsequent appeal procedure.
14. All outcomes are confirmed in writing to both parties within three days.
15. The complainant and any person subject to a complaint have the right to access the full record of the complaint.

[1] Where the complaint is about the Director, the ISR Chair of the Board assumes the role of Director for the purposes of hearing the complaint.

APPENDIX 3: Whom to contact first

Whom to contact first:

General academic or social concerns:

- Homeroom Teacher
- Guidance Counsellor

Subject-specific concerns:

- Homeroom Teacher (Primary)
- Subject Teacher (Senior School)

Examination concerns:

- Programme Lead (IB Diploma Coordinator, iGCSE Programme Lead)
- Examinations Officer

If you are unsure whom to contact, please email office@isr.ch or contact the reception at ISR and they will inform you of the name and contact information for the appropriate member of staff.

NB - Last policy review led in 2024 by Liz Free, Director/CEO