



# COMMUNICATION AND COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

**Lead: Principal**  
**Review: October 2023**

## INTRODUCTION

Horizon International School (HIS) is committed to effective and timely communication between home and school and to listening to members of the school community in order to fulfil its aim to be the best at getting better.

**AY 2023-2024**

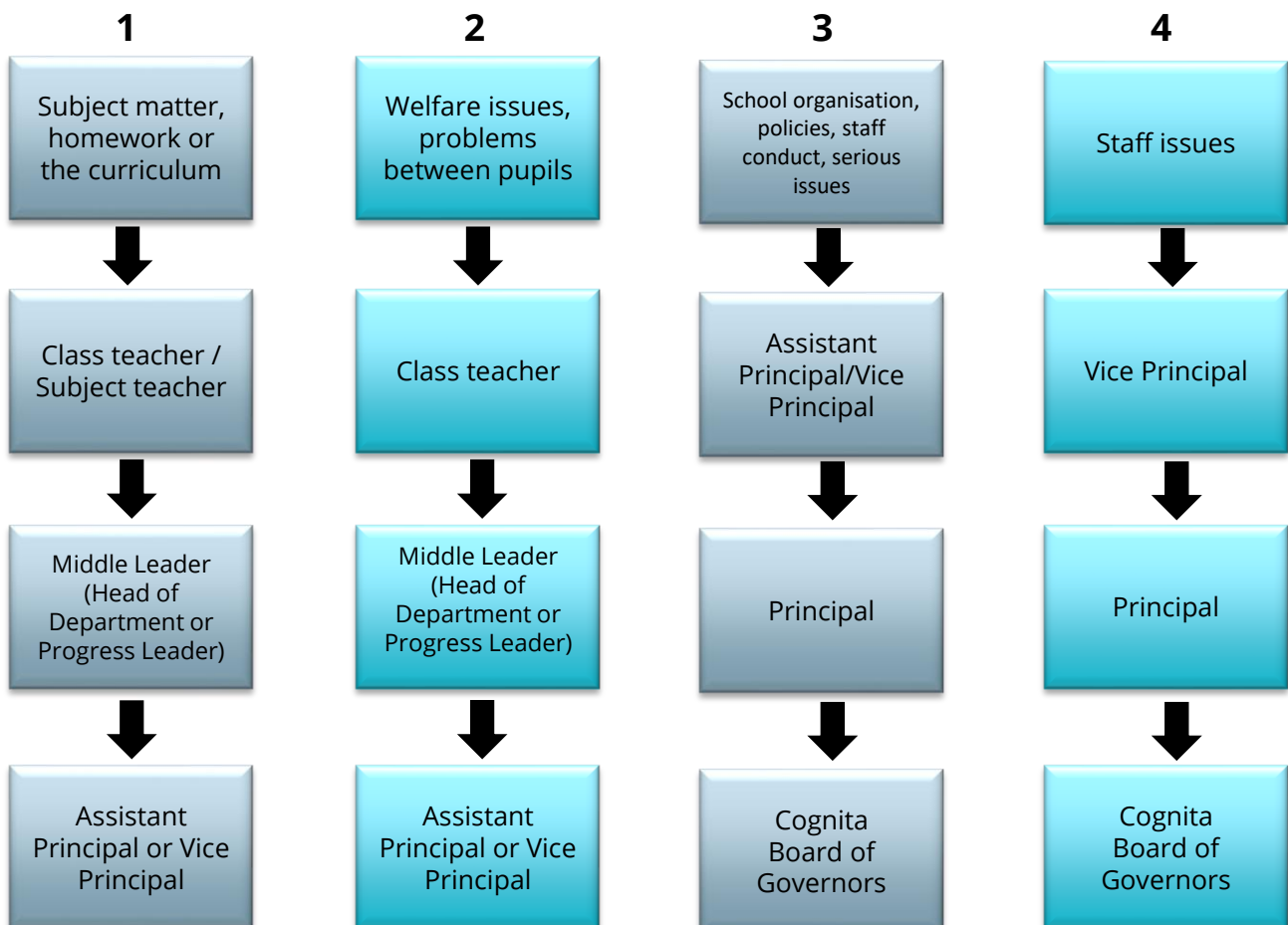
## Introduction

Horizon International School (HIS) is committed to effective and timely communication between home and school and to listening to members of the school community in order to fulfil its aim to be the best at getting better.

## Principles

The guiding principles behind the School Communication and Complaints Procedure are as follows:

- All complaints/communications are dealt with promptly, effectively, objectively and professionally.
- Teachers are available at the start and end of the school day in the classrooms to have a quick word with families and to arrange a longer appointment if required. Teachers may also keep in touch with families by email.
- The school aims to respond to concerns and queries in an informal manner and resolve them quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of all concerned.
- The referral guidelines below outline who should handle the type of issue in question.
- The school will contact those who have raised complaints within two working days.





## Referral Routes for Complaints

### Communication with Parents and the Community

Effective communication is based on mutual respect. Staff must take care in all communications with parents, both formal and informal, in the workplace and out of school.

Staff should avoid engaging in discussions about school issues outside of school. This may well be in breach of confidentiality. Further guidance can be found in the school code of conduct.

All letters and formal communications with parents should be approved by the respective Line Manager prior to being sent home.

Great care should be taken when responding to emails. Teachers should ensure they are following school policy and guidance at all times.

Specialist teachers should copy the appropriate class teacher/form tutor into all communications with parents.

### Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, efforts must be made to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

It may also be the case, however, that the complaint lacks substance and is therefore considered unfounded or unsubstantiated.

### Timescale

The school will make every effort to respond fully to a written complaint within five school days. Where this proves unrealistic, the school will inform the complainant in writing and give some estimate of how long it will take to provide a detailed response. Contact will be made with all complainants within two working days.

Complaints regarding school organisation, school policies, staff conduct and conduct of the Principal will follow a more formal route.



If families are still unsatisfied with the steps taken, this formal procedure applies:

### **i. Formal Complaints**

- a) 'Formal Complaints' will need to be put in writing. (Where this would be difficult for the complainant, they should contact the Principal).
- b) Interviews with staff conducted as part of the formal complaints procedure must be held on the understanding that staff members have the right, if they so wish, to be accompanied by a representative or friend.

### **ii. Procedure in Operation**

- a) All formal complaints must be in writing and must be referred in the first instance to the Vice Principal / Principal (depending on the issue).
- b) In cases where complaints are initially made directly by parents and others to Cognita, Cognita should refer the complainant back to the school, unless the complaint is about the Principal.
- c) If the complaint cannot be investigated objectively by the Principal, or the complainant is dissatisfied with the Principal's response, the management of Cognita must be informed.
- d) Complainants who remain dissatisfied following the investigations of the complaint by the Principal will be given the opportunity to put their complaint to the management of Cognita.
- e) Complainants will be encouraged to make use of the above procedure before referring the complaint further, for example, to the KHDA.

### **iii. Investigating Complaints**

- The Investigating Officer (as named by the Principal) should follow the process below:
- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or if further information is needed);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct an interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of any interviews / discussions.

- iv. Parent/Carer/Principal writes (by letter or email) to the Director of Education (DoE) asking for the formal stage of the complaints procedure to be initiated. The DoE investigates the complaint and shares the outcome within 5 school days. If the concern is not resolved then the parent/carers can request that their concern is heard by a panel of at least three members of the school Governors, at least one of which is not related to the management or running of the school and none of whom will have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.



v. A hearing is arranged within 10 school days, attended by the relevant parties. The Parent(s) may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. The accompanying person should be there in a supportive capacity and can remind or make suggestions to the parent(s) but cannot ask or answer questions on behalf of the parent(s). The panel will investigate, make findings and appropriate recommendations where required. The panel findings and recommendations and the reasons for these will be communicated to the complainant, and, where appropriate, the person being complained about, within 10 working days of the panel hearing. The decision of the panel will be final.

#### vi. In Summary

- Most complaints are best dealt with informally.
- Formal complaints must be made in writing. They will be dealt with by an individual nominated by the Principal.

#### GUIDANCE NOTE – INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS WITH PARENTS

All staff members are kindly reminded that, when speaking with parents, they ensure that initial pleasantries are exchanged before moving on to the main topic of conversation. Staff should always try to be as empathetic, understanding, courteous and emotionally intelligent as possible.

Any concerns raised by the school relating to individual pupils should be discussed with the respective Line Manager prior to any informal discussion with parents.

#### GUIDANCE NOTE – EMAIL COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

When a parent contacts a member of staff with a concern or query via email, the member of staff should acknowledge it within **24 hours** and ensure they **copy his/her reply to his/her Line Manager**.

Where the Line Manager believes the matter warrants the attention of the Principal, he/she should forward it directly. Line Managers should copy their responses to the Vice Principal and Principal.