

COGNITA

**PARENT
COMPLAINT
POLICY**

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF POLICY

We aim to ensure that all members of the school community feel happy, safe, secure, valued and respected so that pupils can learn and fulfil their potential.

We expect all members of the school community to value, respect and treat others fairly and well, showing consideration for the safety, welfare and wellbeing of themselves, others, and their environment.

We will endeavour to resolve issues through good communication and following the guidelines outlined in other policies, e.g. the behaviour policy. However, there may be occasions where parent complaints may arise and need to be addressed, in which case the following procedure will be followed.

Whilst we encourage and welcome parents openly and honestly raising issues with us, it is important to stress that complaints must be raised using appropriate channels (following the procedure set out in this policy). It is not appropriate for parents to raise complaints publicly including but not limited to via social media and, in some cases, doing so may constitute a criminal offence (of defamation, for example). Please refer to our Social Media Policy for further details.

Parents are also reminded that School staff should at all times be treated with respect and courtesy. Complaints should always be raised in a calm and respectful manner. Shouting or any aggressive behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated.

Timeframes

We will always endeavour to resolve complaints as efficiently and promptly as possible.

References to “working days” within this policy are to Monday to Friday, when the school is open during term time.

Please note that the timeframes set out within the policy are indicative only and it may not always be possible to adhere to them. For example, complaints raised shortly before the end of term may take longer to resolve due to school holidays and a lack of key personnel required for the investigation to be undertaken properly. Timescales can also be affected by the involvement of external agencies, such as the police or a regulator.

Confidentiality

Parental complaints or concerns will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents do not adversely affect their children in any way.

We cannot, however, entirely rule out the need to make relevant third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police or a regulator.

1. Stage 1: Informal resolution

1.1 We expect that most complaints can be resolved informally.

- A) If a parent wants to question a decision made by the school at any level, the parent should meet the person directly involved in the decision such as a teacher or supervisor;
 - B) If the parent is still not satisfied, then he/she should meet with the Head of Department or another Senior Leader within the school.
 - C) If the issue is still not resolved, then the parent must meet the Principal of the school to try to resolve the issue;
- 1.2 The informal process (steps A to C) should be completed as promptly as possible and typically within (5) working days.
 - 1.3 Any complaints made directly to the Principal prior to steps 1.1 (A) and (B) will usually be referred back to the relevant member of staff unless the Principal considers it more appropriate to deal with the matter personally. Should this be the case, the aim will still be to resolve the matter informally.

2. Stage 2: Formal resolution

- 2.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint must be made directly to the Principal in writing.
- 2.2 Where the complaint relates to the Principal, the formal complaint should be raised to the Cog Managing Director¹.
- 2.3 Details such as the nature of the complaint, the members of the school community involved, any actions taken to date, any communication to date, times and dates should be included. Parents can invoke Stage 2 of the complaints process without having exhausted Stage 1 of the process where, due to the seriousness of the issue, it is deemed appropriate to do so.
- 2.4 The Principal (or Cog Managing Director where the complaint relates to the Principal) will then consider the matter and decide upon the most appropriate way forward including the person to take the lead in any investigation. The Principal may at any time delegate the investigation of the complaint to another member of the school's senior leadership team.
- 2.5 The Principal (or Cog Managing Director where the complaint relates to the Principal) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, and confirm next steps to the complainant, as soon as practicable following receipt of the complaint. Next steps might (but will not always) include meeting with the involved parent(s) and student(s) and/or interviewing witnesses.
- 2.6 At the conclusion of their investigation, the Principal (or Cog Managing Director where the complaint relates to the Principal) will provide a formal written response to the complainant. Wherever possible, this will be provided within 5 days of completing the investigation. The response will confirm whether or not the allegation is upheld with some explanation for the decision. However, investigation notes and witness statements will not be shared. It would also not be appropriate for the school to disclose any action taken (for example, disciplinary action) in relation to other individuals.

¹ Cognita Schools are organized into clusters of schools referred to as "Cogs. Each Cog is managed by a Managing Director who is a senior member of the Regional Executive Team. Up to date contact details for the appropriate Cog Managing Director can be obtained from the school's administrative team on request.

3. Stage 3: Complaints committee

- 3.1 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation by the Principal (or Cog Managing Director where the complaint relates to the Principal) they may request that the complaint is escalated to the Cognita Complaints Committee by contacting the CEO of Cognita Middle East² within 15 working days of receiving the outcome of Stage 2. Any supporting evidence which the parent wishes to rely on should also be provided with their appeal.
- 3.2 A hearing by the Cognita Complaints Committee is a review of the decision taken at Stage 2. The Cognita Complaints Committee will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised at Stage 2. Stage 3 of the Complaints Process cannot be invoked without having exhausted Stage 2.
- 3.3 The role of the Cognita Complaints Committee is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering the documents provided by both parties and any representations made by the parents and school staff and to reach a decision, on the balance of probabilities, as to whether each complaint is made out in whole or part.
- 3.4 Cognita will acknowledge receipt of the Stage 3 complaint within 48 hours during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.
- 3.5 The Cognita Complaints Committee will be appointed by the CEO of Cognita Middle East and comprise three persons, two of whom shall be from the Cognita Middle East Regional Team and one of whom shall be independent to the management of the school.
- 3.6 A hearing will be scheduled as soon as practicable and normally within 14 working days of receiving the Stage 3 complaint. Timeframes may however be delayed during school holidays. The complainant may be invited to attend the meeting and may bring someone along to provide emotional support. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not permitted. Recordings of hearings are not permitted.
- 3.7 Any documents that the parties wish the Cognita Complaints Committee to consider must be sent to the Cognita Complaints Committee at least 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- 3.8 The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Cognita Complaints Committee.
- 3.9 The Cognita Complaints Committee may adjourn the hearing at any time for further investigation of an issue. Any adjournment should be kept as short as reasonably practicable.
- 3.10 Once the Cognita Complaints Committee considers that all issues have been sufficiently discussed, the hearing will be concluded.
- 3.11 After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Cognita Complaints Committee will reach a decision on the balance of probabilities as to whether the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly decide whether to:
 - Dismiss the complaint in whole or part; or
 - Uphold the complaint in whole or part; and/or
 - Make recommendations.

² Up to date contact details will be provided by the school's administrative team on request.

- 3.12 The outcome will be confirmed to the complainant in writing within 5 working days of conclusion of the hearing.
- 3.13 The decision of the Cognita Complaints Committee will be regarded as final and represents the conclusion of the School's Complaints Procedure.
- 3.14 If a parent remains dissatisfied following conclusion of the School's Complaints Procedure, a complaint may be raised to KHDA.

4 Recording of Complaints

- 4.1 All complaints which have reached Stages 2 or 3 are recorded in the School Complaint Register, including the outcome of the individual complaint and any actions taken as a result. The stage at which the complaint is concluded is recorded. The School Complaint Register must be available for inspection by the School principal or appropriate persons from Cognita at any time.
- 4.2 The School and Cognita processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy. When dealing with complaints, the School / Cognita may process a range of information, which may include the name of the parent(s) and pupil(s) involved as well as sensitive personal data (such as information related to physical or mental health) where this is necessary based on the nature of the complaint.

5. Provisions Relating to Complaints dealt with using this Procedure

- 5.1 A complaint cannot be raised in relation to a pupil who has left the school, unless the issue was first raised when the pupil was enrolled within the school. The child is taken off the school's roll on the final day of the term in which they leave.
- 5.2 Complaints concerns matter of school related finance (such as outstanding school fees) fall outside the scope of this policy. The Principal of the school remains responsible for all financial decisions.
- 5.3 Complaints from groups of parents about the leadership team and/or management style will not be heard collectively. Confidentiality must be maintained for each individual complaint.
- 5.4 The Principal reserves the right to decide that a complaint shall not proceed in accordance with this policy where the complaint is deemed unreasonable. A complaint may be deemed unreasonable for reasons including, but not necessarily limited to, the following:
- Where repeated attempted are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered under this policy.
 - Where there has been an unexpected delay between the incident in question and the making of the complaint.
 - Where the complaint is demonstrably without foundation or merit.
 - Where the complaint has been made in a way that includes aggressive, vexatious or abusive words or communications or seeks to apply undue pressure to a member(s) of staff involved in responding to the complaint.