



Windhoek International School Policy Manual

Concerns and Complaints Procedure Policy

Approved by:	Approval Date:	Next Reviewed:
Board of Directors	27 April 2022	April 2025

School Mission Statement:

To develop the full potential of each student in a stimulating environment of academic excellence, cultural diversity and active social responsibility to become internationally minded independent thinkers.

Purpose of this policy :

Windhoek International School ("WIS") is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, accountability and professionalism. Decisions are based upon an ethic of care which, at all times, acts in the best interests of the children who attend our school. We expect all members of the WIS learning community to be proactive problem solvers and peace makers, and to act in accordance with our school's mission and the IB Learner Profile.

In line with this commitment, this policy is designed, firstly, to enable WIS employees, parents, students, volunteers, or vendors to raise concerns openly and at the appropriate levels and secondly, to provide the appropriate structure within which concerns and complaints are raised and addressed. This policy further aims to ensure that concerns and complaints raised through the appropriate structures are taken seriously and resolved promptly and fairly.

The WIS Concerns and Complaints Procedure Policy:

- is simple and easy to use;
- is available to all members and stakeholders of the WIS community;
- ensures complaints are fairly assessed and responded to promptly;
- is procedurally fair and follows principles of natural justice;
- complies with legislative requirements.

Definitions:

'Concerns' arise from an incident or account of something which requires direct person-to-person intervention in order to:

1. Clarify what occurred; reach a better understanding of the nature of the concern



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2. Identify a means of resolving conflict and/or improving standards
3. Resolve the concern as necessary

'Complaint' is an expression of dissatisfaction towards the actions taken or a perceived lack of action taken. Complaints can be resolved formally, through this procedure, or informally dependent on the complainant's choice. Complaints may include a **'concern'**, which can be defined as an expression of worry or doubt where reassurance is required.

'Unreasonable complaints' include:

- Vexatious complaints:
- Complaints that are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious.
- Complaints that insist upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason.
- Complaints that insist upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner.
- Complaints that are designed to cause disruption or annoyance.
- Complaints that demand for redress which lacks any serious purpose or value.
- Serial or persistent complaints. Serial or persistent complaints will only be marked as 'serial' once the complainant has completed the complaints procedure. It is the complaint that will be marked as 'serial', meaning the complainant can complain about a separate issue if necessary.
- Complaints that are duplicated, sent by the same complainant once the initial complaint has been closed.

'Duplicate complaints' are identical complaints received from a complainant's spouse, partner or child. These complaints will not be addressed again, the individual making the second complaint will be informed that the complaint has been dealt with. Any new details provided by a complainant's spouse, partner, grandparent or child, will be investigated and dealt with in line with the complaints procedure.

'Whistleblowing' is the confidential raising of concerns within Windhoek International School by a member of the WIS community or external parties which pertain to improper conduct or a breach of law and as defined in the WIS Whistleblower Policy.

Concerns and complaints not to include whistle blowing

It is recorded that this policy does not govern or regulate instances of whistle blowing. In such instances, the school's Whistleblower Policy shall be followed through an established process of reporting.

Roles and responsibilities



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The complainant will:

- i. Cooperate with WIS in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- ii. Express the complaint and their concerns in full at the earliest possible opportunity.
- iii. Promptly respond to any requests for information or meetings.
- iv. Ask for assistance as needed.
- v. Treat any person(s) involved in the complaint with respect.
- vi. Refrain from making unreasonable or duplicate complaints.

WIS will:

- i. Be impartial and fair to all parties involved.
- ii. Be respectful of confidentiality duties.
- iii. Be continuously under improvement, using information gathered during the procedure to inform the school's SLT and board.
- iv. Ensure that complaints and concerns are fairly investigated, by an independent person when necessary.
- v. Address all issues and provide appropriate and effective responses where necessary.

.Possible topics of concern could include (but are not limited to) :

- o Student support and other educational topics such as student assessment*
- o Classroom management and related issues*
- o Sexual harassment*
- o Discriminatory behavior*
- o Disciplinary or corrective measures*
- o Verbal and/or physically aggressive or violent behavior*
- o Unsafe physical conditions*
- o Issues related to supervision*
- o Bullying on a minor or major scale*
- o Lapse in professionalism*
- o A failure to adhere to policies and procedures*

.Procedures: Resolution of Concerns

If any student or parent or guardian or staff member has a concern or complaint for any reason, the procedure set out below shall be followed. All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously, with sensitivity and confidentiality. Staff complaints involving employment matters are to be directed through Windhoek International School Staff Association or through the procedures outlined within the Grievance Policy policy.

1. Resolving concerns and complaints where they arise:



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WIS values open and straightforward communication and we seek to cultivate a growth mindset at every level of the school. As such, concerns and complaints shall be couched, as far as possible, in a positive and respectful manner and shall be received with an open mind and with a view towards growth and improvement.

The following steps guide the reporting and resolution of concerns and complaints:

a. **Direct Conversation:**

- i. In the first instance, concerns and complaints should be raised directly with the individuals most closely involved. If a direct conversation is not possible or is likely to proceed to an escalation in the conflict, then proceed to the Mediated Conversation (next step below).
- ii. Direct conversation between members of the WIS community where at least one party is not an employee of WIS is not encouraged and in such instances guidance from the homeroom teacher should be sought to mediate direct conversation between the parties concerned, should direct conversation be suitable.
- iii. Pre-arranged and mutually suitable face-to-face conversations are preferable to emails.
- iv. If the concern or complaint is with an action of an individual or individuals in the employ of WIS, then share this concern directly with the individual or individuals most closely related to the concern.
- v. If the concern or complaint is with another parent or student, then the homeroom teacher should be approached for guidance on whether or not direct conversation is possible. If not, the complainant may proceed to Mediated Conversation (the next step below).
- vi. If the concern or complaint is with classroom management or approaches to teaching, the parent or student should speak first with the teacher responsible for that particular classroom management or teaching.
- vii. It is a professional expectation that any concern or complaint will be openly received as a well-intentioned and constructive opportunity for feedback and that feedback will timeously and respectfully be given.



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viii. Use of the forms in Appendices to this policy is optional at this stage.

a. **Mediated Conversation:**

If a direct conversation does not yield the desired results or is not possible or advisable, then the Homeroom Teacher, the PYP/Middle Years/IGCSE/DP Coordinator, or the School Counselor, as mutually agreed upon by the parties, may at this stage also be relied upon to provide advice, guidance, or a mediated conversation. If uncertain, then approach the Coordinator. If this conversation does not yield the desired result then proceed to a meeting with the Principal.

Use Appendix 1 to document the mediated conversation.

c. **Meeting with Principal:**

If a mediated conversation does not lead to a solution of the concern or complaint, then the concern should be directed to the relevant Principal in writing. The student or parent/guardian, shall request a meeting, by email, with the relevant person and Principal. The appendix 1 form should be used for this purpose, together with whatever further information and/or documentation the complainant deems necessary to enable the relevant Principal to meaningfully consider the concern or complaint.

At the conclusion of the meeting and within two business days thereof the relevant Principal shall inform the complainant (and, where applicable, others involved in the concern or complaint, of the outcome of the meeting and/or (i) further steps to be taken, if any, (ii) further investigation or meeting/s to be conducted, if any and a reasonable timeframe within which same shall be done.

Use appendix 2 to document this meeting.

d. **Meeting of Concern with the Educational Director:**

If, at the conclusion of a meeting with the Principal or, where applicable, at the expiry of the timeframe set by the principle under (C) above, the concern or complaint has not suitably been resolved, then the student/parent/guardian/staff shall, in writing, request a meeting with the Educational Director. This concern or



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complaint will then be investigated and resolved in accordance with school policies and, as necessary, the Director's discretion.

e. **Escalation beyond the Educational Director:**

If a student or parent or staff member has followed each of the steps above and feels that the complaint or concern has not been dealt with satisfactorily by the Educational Director, a letter detailing the incident/s and specifying all steps taken, meetings which have already occurred and the outcomes thereof should be sent to the Chair of the Board of Directors, at chairbod@wis.edu.na.

The following steps will then be taken:

- i. The Board Chair determines whether this complaint is to be referred back to the Educational Director, considered as a full Board, or referred to an ad hoc committee to be formed to address the matter.
- ii. If the matter is taken up, the Board Chair assembles an ad hoc Board-level committee for the purpose of addressing this complaint. A meeting with the complainant will be scheduled for within ten working days. The procedure governing such a meeting will be determined by the ad hoc Board Committee and shall ensure that natural justice is done and shall uphold fairness, confidentiality (where required) and transparency (if possible within the circumstances of the matter). At such a meeting the ad hoc Board Committee shall be entitled to interview any persons it may deem relevant to interview and make such investigations as it may deem fit in order to seek a resolution of the concern or complaint.
- iii. Additional meetings and investigations may be required in order to resolve the matter. The ad hoc committee will make recommendations to the Board of Directors, who will decide on the outcome or solution of the meeting/s and investigation/s.
- iv. The concern or complaint will be considered resolved if the complainant and Board of Directors are 1) in sufficient agreement with the outcome or solution provided by the Board of Directors, or 2) in the absence of agreement, the Board of Directors determines that all appropriate measures have been implemented or addressed.



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2. **Reporting and resolving concerns and complaints:**

- a. Confidentiality: records shall be kept of all formal concerns and complaints that have been escalated to the level of Director, and these will be kept confidential within the Human Resources Office. The school's Human Resources procedures may require that some actions taken by the school remain confidential.
- b. Storage and Record Keeping: Concerns escalating to the level of Principal are recorded and kept accessible within the Principal's possession. Concerns escalating to the level of Director are kept with the Human Resources Office.
- c. Resolution: It will be indicated on the documentation as to the steps this process underwent and at what stage it was resolved.
- d. If the outcome of the concern or complaint warrants or directs it, then the SLT will follow the school's Disciplinary or other relevant Policy.

Linked policies:

This policy should be implemented in conjunction with relevant policies, such as:

1. Disciplinary Policy
2. Academic Honesty Policy
3. Staff Working Agreement
4. Anti-Bullying Policy
5. Alcohol Policy & Drugs Policy
6. Child Protection Policy
7. Inclusion Policy
8. Health & Safety Policy
9. Whistleblower Policy
10. Data Protection Policy
11. Professional Growth and Appraisal Policy
12. Finance Policy

Appendix 1: Complaint & Resolution Form - to be used by parents or students when contacting Teacher or Coordinator, or when escalating the matter to Principal, then Educational Director, then Board of Directors.

The following form may be used to raise concerns or complaints to the relevant supervisor:

Description of the incident or area of concern, including names of individuals involved:
Location and date of the incident or area of concern:
Actions taken thus far:
Requests by the complainant:
Is this a complaint which pertains primarily with regards to: students, staff, parents, or other?



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If a meeting occurs between complainant and Teacher/Coordinator/Principal/Educational Director/Board of Directors, then the following documentation will be made:

- 1. Identify the concern**
- 2. Identify the individuals involved**
- 3. Identify what additional research or investigation is required**
- 4. Identify what actions have already been undertaken**
- 5. Identify which actions will be taken next**
- 6. Identify what it will take for the matter to be satisfactorily resolved**
- 7. Agree upon a time and date when an update will be made to those individuals involved in this concern. Record the incident as appropriate on the school's student information management system.**

Has this matter been satisfactorily resolved? (Y/N)

Date of resolution:

Appendix 3: Concerns and Complaints Flowchart

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS FLOWCHART

If any student, parent, guardian or staff member has a concern or complaint for any reason, the procedure set out below shall be followed. All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously, with sensitivity and confidentiality. Prearranged and face-to-face conversations are preferable to emails. *Staff complaints involving employment matters are to be directed through Windhoek International School Staff Association.*

The following steps guide the reporting and resolution of concerns and complaints:

