



COMPLAINT POLICY

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 *'an 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. Vijay International School 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, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Principal, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Principal or Chair of The Board will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior 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, Vijay International School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

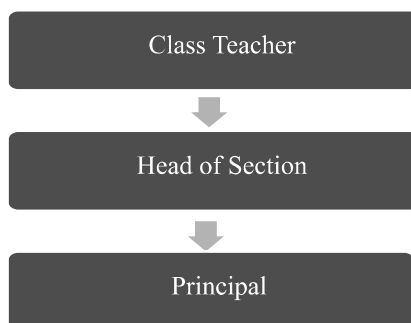
How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A **concern** can be made in person, or in writing by email or through the website

A **complaint** should be made in writing and submitted using the complaints process on the school website.

Concerns should be raised with the **class teacher** in the first instance. If the person raising the concern does not feel it has been appropriately addressed by the class teacher, it should then be escalated to the **Head of Section**, and then to the **Principal** if it is felt that Head of Section has not dealt with the concern.

Process for raising a concern:





The class teacher will decide on whether it needs escalating to the Head of Section, and the Head of Section may escalate to the Principal as needed. In most cases, concerns raised are discussed with the Head of Section, even if the class teacher is able to deal with the situation adequately.

If the concern raised 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 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against *school staff* (except the Principal) should be made in the first instance, in writing to the Principal via the school website. This is submitted directly to the Principal and is Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about *the Principal* should be made in writing and emailed to Mr Fabby Ernesta (the Chair of Governors). Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about *the Chair of Governors*, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Principal via the school website or via email. This is submitted directly to the Principal and is Private and Confidential.

Anonymous complaints

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

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within one month of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within one month of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame only 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 school day after the holiday period.



Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Vijay International School other than complaints that are dealt with under other 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.
● Exclusion of children from school	Complaints about an exclusion from school should be raised with the Principal and Chair of the Board.
● Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with by the Principal and the Chair of the Board.
● 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.
● Whistleblowing	For whistleblowing , please see the Whistleblowing section below.
● Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Vijay International School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. 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 any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Stage 1



Formal complaints must be made to the Principal (unless they are about the Principal), via the school office. This may be done in person at an arranged meeting, or in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form).

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

Within this response, the Principal will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Principal can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The Principal may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Principal (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

The Principal will respond and detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide an explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Vijay International School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Principal will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Principal, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governor. This is the final stage of the complaint's procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Principal or Chair of the Board, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

They 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 Principal or Chair of the Board will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, they will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of two proposed dates, without good reason, the Principal /Chair of the Board 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.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Vijay International School available, the Chair of the Board will source any additional, independent party, in order to make up the 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.

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.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

Before the meeting, the meeting 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
- 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 Vijay International School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 3 school days.

If the complaint is:

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



Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

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 Vijay International School will take to resolve the complaint.



Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Principal or Chair of the Board who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: Phone number: Email Address:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: Date:
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:



By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Roles and Responsibilities:

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Secretary of the Governing Body

The Secretary is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should and will be assigned :

- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings in writing
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Secretary) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person



- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality
- If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the named person handling the complaint

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
- No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant
- We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
- Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.