

Tarbiyyah Primary School

Complaints Policy & Procedure

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Prepared by: Headteacher

Agreed with: Chair of Trustees

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Complaints Policy & Procedure

Tarbiyyah Primary School (TPS) is committed to providing a quality service and education to the highest possible standards. However, there may be occasions when a parent, staff member, or learner may have a complaint to make against the school or an individual in the school. The purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to outline the method by which complaints can be dealt with, in the most efficient manner with the least disturbance possible and following Islamic guidelines. This document sets out the procedure that all complainants must follow.

Investigating Complaints

A member of the school's leadership team investigating the complaint will ensure that they:

- 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 necessary)
- 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 the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of the interview

Resolving Complaints

TPS are concerned about resolving the complaint as quickly and painlessly as possible, so it would be useful if complainants can state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Recording Complaints

TPS will record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. At the end of a meeting or telephone call, a member of staff will ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls will be kept, and a copy of any written response added to the record.

Do you have a complaint?

At TPS we treat a complaint as any clear expression of dissatisfaction which calls for a response, however it is important to differentiate whether the issue is a concern or complaint. Handling informal concerns seriously at the early stage will reduce the chance of the concerns turning into complaints.

If we are trying to improve for the sake of Allah, we should surely follow the way He has shown us through correct Islamic *adaab* (manners) and practice. In the Qur'an it states: "The believers are nothing else than brothers (in Islamic religion). So make reconciliation between your brothers, and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy." (Al-Hujurat 49:10)

The underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising and forgiving where necessary.

The complaints procedure has four stages, and these should be followed in the order set out below. We ask all concerned parties to display the excellent *adaab* (manners and characteristics) that Islam encourages throughout: -

Stage One – Informal (3 days)

Most concerns and complaints can be resolved informally within three days. The first step is to try and resolve the matter in person with the individual with whom you are aggrieved. This is usually the best place to start. If the member of staff is not immediately available, an appointment can be made through the School's office. The person(s) involved may keep informal notes of such discussions along with the response. Speaking face to face with the person with whom you are aggrieved ensures we follow Islamic teachings and avoid *Ghiba* (back-biting). Sometimes, it is simply a matter of giving *Nasihah* (sincere advice) and a written record will be kept for the meeting.

Stage Two – Formal (Up to 21 days)

If no acceptable outcome is achieved and you are unable to resolve your complaint at Stage One, move to Stage Two where your complaint should be made either in person or in writing to the Headteacher at the school address within 7 days of the incident occurring.

When conveying your complaint, you need to provide contact telephone numbers and a postal address so that TPS can communicate with you about the complaint. It would also be useful at this point to indicate what sort of outcome you are looking for. Complaints must be made using the procedures outlined in this document. You can use the School Complaints Form that accompanies this document.

The Headteacher will then look to assign the complaint to the relevant department within the school for investigation. The lead investigator will be known as the complaints co-ordinator.

The complaints co-ordinator will then conduct the formal investigation of the complaint, which will include separate interviews with the complainant and accused (if applicable). If agreeable to all parties, these interviews will be conducted in the presence of a witness chosen by the complaints co-ordinator, normally a member of the Board of Governors or Trustees. A fellow parent or member of staff may accompany the complainant if asked to do so. This will allow for further discussion of the complaint and give an opportunity for the accused to reply to the accusations levelled at him/her. At this point action will be taken to resolve the matter in one of two ways:

- (a) Verbal or written warning to the person at fault along with details of corrective measures; or
- (b) Dismissal of case (no grounds for further action)

The complaints co-ordinator will write to the complainant with a full explanation of any decisions made and, where appropriate, include details of what action TPS has taken, or will be taking, as a consequence of the complaint within 14 days of the complaint being progressed to the formal stage. If the complaint is upheld, the judgement, along with reasons, will be kept on record and, where applicable, include a written warning and a time period for the person at fault to rectify his/her shortcomings. If the written warning is ignored or there is no noticeable improvement on the part of the accused, disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the Schools' internal Discipline Procedure.

Stage Three – Appeal (Up to 21 days)

Insha'Allah (God-willing) by the end of Stage Two the outcome will be to your satisfaction. If we cannot agree on a satisfactory outcome, we hope that at least you will appreciate that the complaint has been dealt with fully, fairly and impartially. However, if you are still unhappy you may ask for your complaint to be considered at Stage Three of the procedure.

The complainant has a right to appeal against a decision taken at Stage Two only if:

- (a) The Complaints Coordinator decided not to uphold the appeal; or
- (b) The corrective action recommended by the complaints co-ordinator was, over time, found to be insufficient in remedying the situation.

The accused has a right to appeal if he or she feels that:

- (a) The disciplinary action taken at Stage Two is inappropriate

All appeals must be made in writing to the Chair of Trustees within 14 days of receiving the complaints co-ordinator's decision. An Appeals Committee will be convened consisting of Governors and Trustees not previously involved with the complaint. A maximum of five persons will make up the Appeals Committee. One person on the Appeals Committee must be independent of the management and running of the school. The Proprietor is responsible for the appointment of the panel. Parents must be allowed to attend and be accompanied to the panel hearing if they wish.

The procedure must provide adequate notice of the hearing and ensure that all parties are aware of timescales and a clear date when a decision will be reached.

The appellant will be called to meet the panel and submit evidence within 7 days of the complaint being received by the Chair of Trustees. The meeting should take place at the earliest possible convenience but no more than 14 days from the complaint being sent to the Chair of Trustees. The complaints co-ordinator involved at Stage Two will also be asked to attend to give details of his/her findings. The proceedings of the meeting will be recorded. The complainant and complaints co-

ordinator will then leave so that the panel can make a decision. They will reach a unanimous or majority decision on the appeal and, if upheld, will instruct the complaints co-ordinator to review his or her previous decision. A written statement outlining the panel's decision will be sent to the parties concerned and written records kept on file at the school. The decision of the Appeals Committee will be final and binding and will exhaust the internal procedure.

General Applications

Anonymous complaints: It will usually be the case that anonymous complaints are disregarded. If an anonymous complaint refers to something quite serious then it will be at the Management Committee's discretion to decide whether the complaint warrants investigation.

Confidentiality: Conversations and correspondence relating to the complaint will be treated with discretion.

Timescale: It is hoped that each Stage of the complaints procedure will take no more than thirty working days to investigate and resolve. Complaints that are very serious will be dealt with sooner

Suspension from Duty: In some circumstances, it may be considered advisable to suspend a member of staff from duty whilst the complaints procedure is in progress. This will not, however, constitute disciplinary action against that staff member.

Complaints against a parent: If a member of staff has a complaint against a parent, the Headteacher will act as Complaints Co-ordinator for Stage Two of the procedure. The parent may, at any stage, be accompanied by a fellow parent.

Student Complaints: Children must communicate their complaints through their Parents, Carers or Guardians who should then follow the Complaints Procedure as outlined above.

Monitoring the effectiveness of this policy

This policy will be closely monitored for its effectiveness and reviewed every year.