



دار المعرفة
dar al marefa

Dar Al Marefa Parental Complaints Policy

2025 - 2026

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PREAMBLE/ Philosophy

- 1.1 The Parents Complaints Policy is relevant to all current pupils of the school, including those in the KG. Complaints from other individuals who are not parents will not fall within the scope of this policy and should be directed, in writing, to the principal.

1.2 Policy Purpose

Dar Al Marefa strives to deliver the best possible teaching and pastoral care for its students. We hope that any concerns or complaints can be addressed promptly. Where more formal structures are needed, the school has a formal complaints procedure. The purpose of the policy is:

- To ensure that parents/guardians have a clear, structured, and respectful process for raising concerns or complaints.
- To promote open communication, transparency, and continuous improvement.
- To ensure that all complaints are handled promptly, fairly, and confidentially.

1.3 Policy Scope

A complaint is a form of expressing discontent with a situation that warrants concern. It could be directed towards the school, a certain department, or a staff member. Any issue about which a parent is dissatisfied with action by the school is covered under this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent thinks that the school acted wrongly or failed to take necessary actions.

The policy applies to all parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school.

The policy covers academic, behavioural, communication, and operational concerns, including those related to teaching and learning, school environment, administration, and staff.

Only a few formal complaints have been made which shows that relations with the school and between students and parents is constructive and enables matters to be dealt with informally. It is our aspiration, even at this point, that there are mutually beneficial discussions. Parents know that concerns and complaints will always be treated seriously and kept confidential. The school exists for your child, and rest assured that your child will not face any repercussions for a complaint that you or your child makes in good faith.

1.5 Policy Objectives:

The aim of this document is to define the process of feedback submission and how complaints are lodged. While parent and pupil feedback are always welcomed, this is not intended to be the sole mechanism; rather, it is an important mechanism. In cases where changes to the time frames set in this policy are necessary, you will be informed, provided with reasoning, and given new timelines. The policy main objectives are:

- Ensure a consistent process for documenting and resolving complaints.
- Provide parents with timely feedback and clarity about outcomes.
- Uphold the school's commitment to IB values, UAE regulations, and parent partnership.

This document does not pertain to issues such as:

- Appeals concerning internal appraisal processes for external qualifications
- Individual disciplinary matters concerning members of the teaching faculty

1.6 The policy regarding anonymous complaints is flexible. You have the option to submit an anonymous complaint or request deletion of identifying information through your school email.

PUBLICATION AND AVAILABILITY

- 2.1 Dar Al Marefa enables its procedures for complaints to be accessed by the parents of its pupils and prospective pupils from its website and the Parent Portal. Dar Al Marefa will ensure that any parent who requests this Policy is provided with same.
- 2.2 This policy is available as a hard copy upon request.
- 2.3 Dar Al Marefa can provide assistance in large print or have Arabic-speaking staff aid parents through the policy if needed.
- 2.4 All school personnel are informed of the existence of the complaints policies and are expected to know our processes for addressing complaints and will be most helpful when they are made aware of an issue.

DEFINITION AND INTERPRETATIONS

3.1 For the following terms in this policy:

- 3.1.1 Working days refers to Monday to Friday mornings and only when the school is open during term time. Term dates are available on the Dar Al Marefa website.
- 3.1.2 In the case of potential long delays because of School holidays, Dar Al Marefa takes a fair and reasonable approach to alleviate, any undue burden or imbalance caused by such delays.

THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Informal Resolution:

Parents are encouraged to first raise concerns informally with the relevant teacher or staff member.

- 4.1 All complaints will be managed professionally and compassionately. If complaints are submitted during term time, they will be responded to within 5 days. During school breaks, responses will be given at the earliest opportunity. Resolving the complaint is beneficial for all parties involved, therefore the school will aim to address all stages of the complaint within 28 days.

4.2 Formal Submission: (4 Steps)

A complaint is considered in four stages:

- 4.2.1 Stage One: Informal Resolution.
- 4.2.2 Stage Two: Formal Resolution.
- 4.2.3 Stage Three: Principal's Review.
- 4.2.4 Stage Four: Final Appeal Procedure.

4.3 Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- 4.3.1 A swift and informal approach is taken to resolve most complaints.

Who to contact:

- 4.3.2 Parents wishing to raise a concern should contact the child's homeroom teacher or SWA first. This can be done in person, by letter, phone, email, or through ManageBac for Secondary and Seesaw for Primary.

For primary aged children. In many instances, the matter will be resolved immediately to the parents' satisfaction. In case the homeroom teacher/ Student Wellbeing Advisor (SWA) is unable to resolve the concern, it might be necessary for him/her to consult with the coordinators and/or the Head of School.

- 4.3.3. It is rare that parents approach the Head of School at this stage. Most parents' complaints are forwarded to the coordinator/homeroom teacher/SWA. Only in exceptional cases does the Head of School intervene personally.

Time frame:

- 4.3.4 Dar Al Marefa aims to have healthy relationships between the parents, staff and children. We strive to ensure that all issues are resolved amicably. We encourage prompt response from the staff to the issues raised to them.
- 4.3.5 The teacher/homeroom teacher/SWA/Leadership will collate all concerns and complaints along with the date they were received. If after five working days the matter remains

unresolved, or if stakeholders alongside the parents do not agree with the resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed to Stage 2 of this policy.

- 4.3.6 Parents who perceive a specific staff member's action as serious have the option to escalate the complaint directly to the Head of School/Principal. It is the Head of School/Principal's responsibility to ensure that within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint, the parents are met or contacted after aiming to resolve the issue with the person best placed to handle it.
- 4.3.7 The relevant staff member(s) will be informed, and the corresponding complaint will be shared with them.

Informal conversation:

- 4.3.8 Once a query or concern has been raised, there is a possibility that the concerned staff member may request you for an informal meeting to discuss the issue.
- 4.3.9 You may bring your friend, partner, or a parent to the conversation if they are the one that raised the concern. A parent may accompany their child to the discussion depending on the nature of the concern raised.
- 4.3.10 This stage is still focused on informal discussions which are very important as dialogue. In most cases, it would be expected that all concerns would be addressed within two weeks.
- 4.3.1 It is the staff's responsibility to ensure that the participant understands the remaining actionable items from the conversation and make notes regarding the discussion.
- 4.3.2 Parents are advised to move on to Stage 2 of the procedure if there are no satisfactory resolutions after the meeting.

4.4 Stage 2: Formal Resolution

Who to contact:

- 4.4.1 In the event that informal resolution fails, it is recommended that parents address their complaints in writing to the principal.
- 4.4.2 Within five working days of receiving a written complaint, the principal will meet the relevant parents and hold a discussion on the matter. A resolution will be made, if possible. In cases where a complaint is raised against a specific staff member, it is at the discretion of the principal to determine if that staff member should be present during this stage.
- 4.4.3 The Head of School will designate an Investigating Officer who will investigate the issue at hand and will respond to the complaint in no more than five additional working days. In communicating the investigation report, the officer will state whether they believe there is an issue that needs to be addressed.
- 4.4.4 The school will maintain written documentation of all meetings and interviews relevant to the complaint.

- 4.4.5 Parents that remain unsatisfied with the outcome fall under 'Stage 3' of the procedure in which an appeal is lodged to be considered by the Director and/or the Board of Governors.

4.5 Stage 3: Principal's/Governing body Review

- 4.5.1 Appealing to the principal/governing body will automatically place parents under Stage 3 of the procedure to be reviewed.
- 4.5.2 The principal/governing body will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days and provide a response within an additional five working days.
- 4.5.3 The Principal/Governing Body's Review will consist of the following:
- (a) Reviewing the case to ensure procedural compliance.
 - (b) Review the written audit trail of the meetings, interviews, and any submitted documents.
 - (c) Review the decision of the principal.
- 4.5.4 Together with the principal, a member of the governing body will communicate the decision to the parents.

4.6 Stage 4: Process for Final Appeal

- 4.6.1 For parents who would like to escalate to Stage 4 of the procedure, they will be directed to the Chairman of the Board for consideration.
- 4.6.2 The Chairman of the Board and Principal will respond to the complaint within three working days and will undertake to hold a hearing within an additional ten working days.
- 4.6.3 **The panel will include:**
- a) The Chairman of the Board
 - b) Principal and Head/s of School
 - c) One independent representative not associated with the management of the school.
- 4.6.4 If a complaint is lodged against a staff member, that staff member is entitled to attend the hearing and present their case to the panel.
- 4.6.5 Parents and, if relevant, staff members are allowed to be accompanied by a colleague or HR representative, though legal counsel will not be permitted.
- 4.6.6 The panel will try to address the parents' complaint right away, without the need for further inquiry if it is within reason to do so.
- 4.6.7 In situations where further investigation is needed, the Panel has the authority to decide the course of action. After considering all the facts that they deem relevant, the Panel will come to a decision and may issue recommendations, all within seven working days post-hearing. The Panel will communicate the decision and its rationale directly to the parents. The decision made by the Panel is conclusive and will not be changed. The written

assertions and recommendations of the Panel, if any, will be distributed to the parents, the governing body, the Principal and SLT, and the person against whom the complaint has been lodged, if applicable.

- 4.6.8 The record will be securely stored and remain confidential under the purview of HR/SLT.

4.7 Issues concerning the Heads of School or the Principal

- 4.7.1 Each Head of School and Principal, hope to manage any complaint against them. If the matter becomes more serious than it is perceived to be, it is better for the complainants to send those to the Chairman of the Board. From there, any appeal will directly go to Stage Four of the Procedure.
- 4.7.2 It's preferable to resolve issues related to the principal informally. If the complainant believes this is not an option, then the complaint can be submitted to the Chairman of the Board. Any appeal would automatically move to Stage Four of the Procedure, but the chairman would not participate in the Appeal Panel.

REACHING OUT TO KHDA

- 5.1 Dar Al Marefa still upholds the contract between the parent and the school. If a parent remains dissatisfied after going through all four stages articulated in this policy, they have the option to escalate the issue to the KHDA by reaching out to them through the E-Feedback System.
- 5.2 It is within the powers of the KHDA to either uphold all decisions or repeal them entirely. Their final decisions are mandatory for both the school and parents.

DOCUMENTATION

- 6.1 After settling a complaint, the school will maintain written documentation of all complaints, indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or advanced to a panel hearing.
- 6.2 As the school may determine, supplementary records may be kept, which may include the following:
- 6.2.1 The date the issue was raised
 - 6.2.2 Parent's Name
 - 6.2.3 Pupil's Name
 - 6.2.4 The issue presented
 - 6.2.5 Relevant investigations conducted and their findings
 - 6.2.6 Relevant eyewitness accounts
 - 6.2.7 The names of the staff members who dealt with the issue at every stage.
 - 6.2.8 Relevant Documents including all correspondence pertaining to the issue (emails, phone records etc.).

- 6.3 Issues concerning Child Protection or Safeguarding will be immediately escalated to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the School who will conduct an immediate case review and may escalate to the Safeguarding Team as needed.
- 6.4 For additional details about dealing with and protecting pupils, kindly refer to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- 6.5 Heads of School and SMLT will keep all records of written complaints, including whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or investigated, locked away in confidential files.
- 6.6 The Principal's PA will keep all formal complaints (written - Stage Two, Three, and Four) on a central register which the boards of governors may examine during its annual review.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- 7.1 Records, statements, and correspondence about complaints will be kept confidential except when including legal inspections, court orders as per UAE laws.
- 7.2 The records will be kept for as long as is deemed necessary based on the situation at hand, complying with data protection regulations. Parents can rest easy knowing that every concern or complaint brought up will be taken seriously and handled with utmost confidentiality.
- 7.3 All records, statements and correspondence will remain private.
- 7.4 Parents should understand that regardless of the complaint's circumstances and whether it is found to have merit, they will not receive any information concerning the privacy consequences for staff, other students or parents from the related actions taken.

UNFOUNDED GRIEVANCES

- 8.1 With the expectation that this document will minimize discontent with the school, it is recognized that there are some rare instances when a complainant may persist in their dissatisfaction with the outcomes reached within the complaint-handling procedure.
- 8.2 In situations where a complainant makes an attempt to escalate an issue that has already been addressed and resolved through the complaints policy, the principal will reach out to inform them that the issue has been settled and either that phase of the policy is exhausted or the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted and the issue is deemed closed. Such complaints are deemed unreasonable.
- 8.3 Receiving additional correspondence on the same issue will be treated as vexatious. This kind of grievance is also considered unreasonable.
- 8.4 In the event that the complainant reaches out to the school once more regarding the same matter, the school has the option of choosing not to reply. The specific instances in which we opt not to reply include:
 - 8.4.1 The school has made every effort to assist the complainant, and the school's position has been articulated in writing along with the complainant's available options.

8.4.2 The complainant repeatedly contacts the school but only raises the same issues outlined in previous communications

8.4.3 The school has a reasonable basis for believing the purpose of the contact is interference or harassment.

8.4.4 The complainant behaves or communicates in ways that are inappropriate towards staff.

8.5 In principle, Dar Al Marefa does not restrict complainants' contact with the school. This said, Dar Al Marefa does not accept harmful, abusive, threatening, or grotesque conduct and will act to safeguard staff from such conduct.

8.6 After the school has determined that it is appropriate to cease responding, the complainant will be notified in writing. In making this decision, however, the school will ensure that complainants who bring new complaints are given a fair hearing and that the school is acting reasonably in these matters.

TRAINING

9.1 Dar Al Marefa organizes periodic guidance and training sessions for staff and volunteers so that they understand what is expected of them by this policy, and so that they possess adequate knowledge and skills to perform their duties.

9.2 The frequency and level of training is based on the position of the each staff member or volunteer.

Policy Review

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