

LUSITÂNIA PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE POLICY

1. 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 generally defined as ‘*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*’.

It is in everyone’s interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage.

As a way to encourage input from all stakeholders the school will place Suggestion Boxes in convenient locations.

Any suggestions, complaints, compliments etc. placed in these boxes should be signed and dated.

The boxes will only be opened by a member of the Board of Governors and they will decide what the appropriate action should be, in terms of this policy of the matter is a complaint.

Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures. Schools should take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

There are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. In those cases, the school’s formal procedure should be invoked through the stages outlined within the procedure

In any case, ALL complaints should be recorded in a “Complaints Register” to be kept by the School Secretary.

The Register must include: the date the complaint is made and a short description of the nature of the complaint and the eventual action or decision taken to close the matter and the date on which the case was considered closed.

Informal complaints must be recorded simply as to the nature of the complaint and the action taken, if any, and no personal details of the complainant need be included in the register.

A formal complaint must be identified as such in the Register and the procedures outlined below invoked.

2. WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT?

Any person, including members of the general public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply, such as, but not limited to, complaints about abuse or any criminal activity.

The School must not limit complaints to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

a. **Parents: Complaints’ Procedure**

Lusitânia takes all complaints seriously. Complaints of all types are dealt with in accordance with this procedure:

Complainants can be assured that:

- i. Their complaint will be addressed courteously and efficiently and within the timeframes set out in this policy.
- ii. As far as is possible their complaint will be treated as confidential.
- iii. They will be advised if and when necessary appropriate action will be taken to address their complaint and the results of that action.

- b. Parents can, in particular, be reassured that their child will not be discriminated against because they have made a complaint.
- c. Parents are encouraged, in the first instance, to raise a complaint of a general nature with their child's teacher. If the complaint is of an academic nature parents are encouraged, in the first instance, to raise the matter with the Deputy Head.

3. STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- a. It is normally the case that a complaint can be satisfactorily resolved informally i.e. by sensible liaison between the parties involved or by the matter being addressed by the relevant member of staff and unless the matter is of a serious nature the complainant should in the first instance raise the complaint informally (either orally or on paper).
- b. The complaint will, under normal circumstances, be resolved within 48 hours and may or may not merit a written response.

4. STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION

- a. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis or if the complaint is of a serious nature the complaint should be submitted in writing to the Headmaster.
- b. **Should the complaint involve either the Headmaster or the Deputy Head, the complaint must immediately be referred to the Board of Governors for resolution.**
- c. This letter must outline the nature of the complaint, the individuals against whom the complaint is made, if relevant, any steps that have been taken to resolve the complaint informally and should be dated and signed by the complainant.
- d. **Under Stage 2 (Formal Resolution) of this process:**
 - i. The Headmaster will meet, or speak to, the complainant, within 48 hours of receiving the complaint.
 - ii. The Headmaster will, under normal circumstances, instruct the appropriate member of staff to investigate the complaint (e.g. if the complaint is of an academic nature the Deputy Head/or the relevant Head of Department will be asked to investigate the matter).
 - iii. Where required, the Headmaster will conduct the investigation and advise the Board of Governors of the situation.
 - iv. Normally, following contact with the complainant, the investigation will be completed within 48 hours and the complainant & the Board of Governors will be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation by the Headmaster.
- e. **Stage 3 – HEADMASTER’S HEARING**
 - i. If the complaint has been dealt with by the Headmaster under **Stage 2 (Formal Resolution)** of this procedure and the complainant is still not satisfied with the manner in which the complaint has been addressed or the outcome of the investigation under **Stage 2 (Formal Resolution)** of this process, he/she should proceed to **Stage 3 (Headmaster’s Hearing)**.
 - ii. The complainant should write to the Headmaster within 3 working days of receiving the outcome of **Stage 2 (Formal Resolution)** of the process.
 1. This letter must outline both the original complaint and why the complainant believes that the complaint has not been resolved formally to his/her satisfaction under **Stage 2 (Formal Resolution)** of this procedure.
- f. The Headmaster reserves the right to insist that the complaint is dealt with **under Stage 2 (Formal Resolution)** of the process if the complainant in the first instance, raises the matter under **Stage 3 (Headmaster’s Hearing)** of this process.
- g. The Headmaster must inform the Board of Governors that the Complaint in question has been referred to **Stage 3**.

h. **Under these circumstances:**

- i. The Headmaster will acknowledge the rejection of the proposed resolution under **Stage 2** of the complaint in writing and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practical and normally within 5 working days of receiving the complaint.
- ii. The complainant will be invited to attend a meeting with the Headmaster together with the Deputy Head.
- iii. After the meeting the headmaster will reach a decision concerning the complaint.
- iv. The decision will be communicated to the complainant by the Headmaster in writing within 3 working days of the hearing. A copy of the findings will be sent to the Board of Governors, Complainant and the Deputy Head and any other relevant parties.

5. STAGE 4 - PANEL HEARING

- a. If the complainant is still not satisfied with the manner in which the complaint has been addressed or the outcome of the investigation under **Stage 3 (Headmaster's Hearing)**, he/she should proceed to **Stage 4 (Panel Hearing)**.
- b. The complainant should write to the Chairman of the Board of Governors of Lusitânia, within 5 working days of receiving the outcome of **Stage 3 (Headmaster's Hearing)** of the process.
- c. This letter must outline both the original complaint and why the complainant believes that the complaint has not been resolved formally to his/her satisfaction under **Stage 3 (Headmaster's Hearing)** of this procedure.
- d. The Chairman of the Board of Governors reserves the right to insist that the complaint is dealt with under **Stage 2 (Formal Resolution) or Stage 3 (Headmaster's Hearing)** of the process if the complainant in the first instance, raises the matter under **Stage 4 (Panel Hearing)** of this process.
- e. **Under these circumstances:**
 - i. The Chairman of the BOG will acknowledge the complaint in writing and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practical and normally within 5 working days of receiving the complaint.
 - ii. The Chairman of the BOG will refer the matter for consideration to a Complaints Panel.
 - iii. The Complaints Panel appointed by the Chairman of the BOG will consist of three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school.
 - iv. The Complainant will be invited to attend the Panel Hearing and may be accompanied at the hearing by one other person (a 'friend'). Legal representation will not normally be appropriate and will only be permitted at the discretion of the Complaints Panel.
 - v. The Headmaster will also be invited to attend the Panel Hearing.
 - vi. After the hearing, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision concerning the complaint; this decision may include recommendations.
 - vii. The decision/recommendations will be communicated to the complainant by the Chairman of the BOG within 3 working days of the hearing. A copy of the findings and recommendations will be sent to the Headmaster.
 - viii. **The decision of the Panel shall be final.**

6. Action which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints will be handled in terms of the relevant School Policies and Legislation.
7. In all cases from **Stage 2** onward, a record of the complaint will be kept on file for one year from the resolution of the complaint.