2026

Al Zahra College
Complaints Handling Policy

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Introduction

Al Zahra College welcomes feedback from all members of the College community and takes all complaints or concerns that may be raised seriously. This Complaints Handling Policy is designed to assist you to understand how to make a complaint.

Purpose

Our policy and procedures aim to ensure that:

- Any complaint is dealt with in a fair, open and responsive manner, with the goal of reaching a timely and satisfactory outcome
- The College listens to questions and criticism, and responds positively to achieve continuous improvement
- Decisions taken to resolve complaints will consider the best interests of all parties concerned. However ultimately, the decisions on how to best run the College are the responsibility of the College's staff, and the headmaster.

Definitions

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to Al Zahra College related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. Complaints and allegations of staff misconduct or reportable conduct are managed separately to other complaints. Refer to the section at the end of this policy - Complaints and Allegations of Staff Misconduct or Reportable Conduct for more information.

Al Zahra College's Commitment

Al Zahra College is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. Our Complaints Handling Procedure involves contacting the College Headmaster and/or the Programme Coordinators, which will allow us to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints. Complaints are documented on our online complaints management system. All complaints that you take to the Headmaster or to a Programme Coordinator will be treated confidentially.

Informal Complaint Resolution

The majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. We therefore ask that, where appropriate, you first raise your concern directly with the relevant staff member. Even if the issue is resolved informally, all staff are required to log issues through our complaints management system, so we are able to identify any systemic issues arising and take appropriate rectification action.

The Formal Complaint Process

The following procedures are a guide explaining how the School will address a complaint. There may be cases where the procedure is not appropriate and other actions will be taken. The College will determine on a case by case basis on the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

Making the Complaint

The College has determined that any issue raised in writing (by email or letter) that is an expression of dissatisfaction, should be considered a complaint and managed in accordance with complaints handling procedures. Complaints can be addressed to the Executive Staff as follows:

- The Headmaster
- The PYP, MYP or DP Coordinators

The receiving party may refer the complaint to a more appropriate person for further information and explanation. In many cases, matters can be resolved by discussion and explanation. If a Complainant is in any doubt of the best person to contact, the complaint should be addressed to the headmaster. Any staff members receiving a complaint verbally should encourage the Complainant to present them to the school in writing. They should also notify the most relevant Executive staff listed above about the discussion so that the matter can be received appropriately when it does arrive.

Acknowledging and handling the Complaint

On receipt, the Headmaster or Coordinators will acknowledge the complaint and advise an approximate time frame to investigate the matter.

They also should:

- Carefully listen to the Complainant's concerns and their desired outcomes
- Request further information from the Complainant and/or from third parties if required.
- Keep appropriate, confidential records of the matter*
- Refer the complaint to a more senior staff member or the Headmaster where appropriate
- Keeping all informed regarding the progress of the complaint

All formal complaints are logged through the College's online complaints management system which is shared with the School Executive.

Outcomes

The outcome of a complaint will vary on a case-to-case basis depending on the circumstances surrounding the grievance. All complaints received will be entered into our Complaints Register and where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which may require improvement.

However, outcomes could include:

- The Complainant understands the situation and no longer feels aggravated or upset
- The Headmaster or a member of the Executive Staff will conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.
- The Complainant received a written response
- Where appropriate, the respondent will receive disciplinary action where a School Policy or Code of Conduct has been breached.
- Where the complaint is regarding the actions of another parent, if appropriate, a mediation process may be initiated by the College in an attempt to address the concerns, acknowledging that the School cannot enforce an outcome.
- Where the complaint is regarding the actions of students, the involvement of the School Counsellor may be recommended.

If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives with the Chair of the College Council. Beyond this point, there is no subsequent appeal process.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint, and, if relevant, to a person against whom a complaint is made. The College is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process.

Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure.

Complaints and Allegations of Staff Misconduct or Reportable Conduct

Complaints and allegations of staff misconduct and/or reportable conduct are managed by the College in a different manner to other complaints. This is because the College has legal obligations to report certain staff conduct to external authorities. Staff misconduct is a broad term that could include breaches of professional boundaries, codes of conduct or standards of behaviour, whereas reportable conduct is a term defined in law as including:

- any sexual offence or sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of a child (including child pornography offences, sexual touching or an offence involving child abuse material), including grooming behaviours;
- any assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child;
- any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child (whether or not, in any case, with the consent of the child).

If your complaint relates to alleged staff misconduct or reportable conduct, please make your complaint to the Headmaster or if this person is the subject of your complaint please contact the Programme Coordinators.

For more information about how the College's complaints handling procedures regarding allegations of staff misconduct or reportable conduct, please refer to our **Procedures for Handling Allegations of Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct** document also available on our website.

IB Complaints Policy

This section specifies IB Parent or legal guardian and student complaints procedures. The written procedures for how the College deals with complaints are outlined in the above sections of this document.

Where students and/or parents raise a complaint related to the IB, the procedures documented in the policy are followed to address the concern. All complaints are processed in a fair, timely and responsive manner to address student and parental concerns and to support school development. Any decisions made will consider the best interests of all parties concerned.

Decisions about the IB Programme, or "IB programme decisions" relate specifically to those made by Al Zahra College staff or its leadership teams, which affect a student's completion of, or participation in, IB programmes and/or courses, and those decisions which affect students' preparation for further education. These include, but are not limited to:

- Withdrawal from IB Diploma due to misconduct relating to Academic Integrity (Procedures relating to Academic Integrity are addressed in the Academic Honesty Policy for IB Diploma Students.

- Accusations of students and the investigation of misconduct relating to Academic Integrity (Procedures relating to Academic Integrity are addressed in the Academic Honesty Policy for IB Diploma Students.

- Submission of internally assessed and externally assessed work to eCoursework (if a students' internally assessed work is received after a published internal school submission date, the last piece of work received by the internal school submission date can be used for submission)

- Late fees incurred for retakes as a result of failure to meet internal application deadline dates.

- The selection of courses/subjects available at Al Zahra College when students make IB subject selections and course set.

- Decisions relating to a student's subject pathway and placement in subjects to comprise their course set.

- Requirements for students to meet attendance and academic achievement criteria and therefore be allowed to continue with the full IB Diploma

- Decisions pertaining to the level of support provided for internally assessed work (written feedback is only provided on one draft of internally assessed work before students are expected to submit a final draft, students do not automatically get feedback on late submission of draft work).

- Declaring a student to not be in good standing with the school and therefore the non-enrolment of the student as an IB Diploma/retake candidate

- Standard of teaching, classroom facilities and examination facilities

- Pastoral concerns (procedures relating to any pastoral matters are addressed in the Behaviour Management Policy).

For all the above complaints, the written procedures to be followed are detailed in the above section of this document. The relevant IB Coordinator is involved in the investigation of any student or parental complaints relating to the IB Programme.

If a student or parent seeks to appeal a grade / grades awarded by the IB after the issue of results, the appeals process outlined in "***General Regulations: Diploma Programme***" *(see the link* General Regulations: Diploma Programme) will need to be followed.