




Title : **Procedures for Managing  
Complaints at Dukhan English  
School**

Status : **Current**

Review Date : **January 2023**

| Department             | Prepared by   | Reviewed by | Approved by |
|------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|
| QatarEnergy<br>Schools |  |             |             |
| January 2023           | VHE/1   | VHE         | VH          |

*“Our vision is for our students to be high achieving, healthy and happy individuals, well prepared to take their place as global citizens and leaders of the future.”*

## **CONTENTS**

Foreword

1. Purpose
2. Scope
3. Definitions/ Abbreviations
4. Procedure
5. Appendices

Appendix I – QatarEnergy Schools Complaint Record

Appendix ii – Guidance for QatarEnergy Schools in Handling Unreasonably Persistent or Harassment complaints

## **FOREWORD**

This procedural guidance has been developed by the Education Section (VHE) of the Human Capital Directorate (VH) and circulated for review by user departments before endorsement for use by the Executive Vice President (EVP) for Human Capital.

This document is published for use by the Education Section. This guideline provides support and guidance for implementation of the Policy for Management of Complaints in QatarEnergy Schools which in turn is aligned with the Speaking Up Policy, a corporate policy which supports the QatarEnergy Code of Conduct.

The document in its present form reflects, as far as possible, the current corporate requirements.

This document is subjected to periodic review to re-affirm its adequacy or to conform to any changes in the corporate requirements or to include new developments on its subject matter.

All comments/views, recommendations etc. on this guideline should be forwarded to the Head, Education Section.

.

## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 QatarEnergy encourages an open environment where issues can be discussed and resolved between individuals in a positive manner with special regard to the QatarEnergy values. It is based on the belief that co-operation and a sense of partnership between staff, parents and schools will assist in ensuring open and positive relationships.
- 1.2 From time to time, however, parents may express concern or make a complaint, either orally or in writing, about some aspect of the conduct/operation of the school or an individual member of staff. This policy sets out a formal procedure to assist with resolving the issue.
- 1.3 Schools will always give serious consideration to concerns and complaints that are brought to its attention. Anonymous complaints will not normally be considered, however schools will reserve the right to follow up on anonymous complaints should there, for example, be child protection or safeguarding concerns.
- 1.4 In cases where it is considered that complaints are unreasonably persistent or of a harassing nature, the school may take actions as referenced in Appendix ii.
- 1.5 All complaints shall be dealt with fairly; free from discrimination on any grounds in line with the requirements as stipulated by the MoEHE.

## 2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This Policy applies to complaints made by parents, students, or a member of the QatarEnergy schools community relating to the actions of staff employed in QatarEnergy schools, where they affect individual students. However, schools need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest possible stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.
- 2.2 **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'.
- 2.3 It is in everyone's interest that **complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage**. 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 QatarEnergy Schools Complaints and Procedure Policy should be invoked through the stages outlined within this process.
- 2.4 This Policy applies to complaints made about a Principal, a Head of School, a teaching member of staff or a non- teaching member of staff.

- 2.5 This Policy does not provide for the resolution of issues brought forward by staff Members. Such issues shall be dealt with through the HR Staffing Grievance Policy.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| QatarEnergy Schools | Dukhan English School, Mesaieed International School         |
| VH                  | Executive Vice President Human Capital QatarEnergy           |
| Senior Leaders      | Members of the Senior Management Team of QatarEnergy schools |
| Head of School      | Head of a QatarEnergy Primary or Secondary School            |
| Staff Member        | Any employee of QatarEnergy schools                          |
| Principal           | Principal of a QatarEnergy school                            |
| The Complainant     | The person raising the complaint                             |
| QatarEnergy HR      | Human Resources  |

### 4. PROCEDURE

#### COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR QatarEnergy SCHOOLS

1. Initial Approach
2. Formal Complaint to Principal
3. Formal Complaint to Head of Education
4. QatarEnergy Review by Arbitration Committee

#### 4.1 Stage 1 – INITIAL APPROACH

##### GUIDELINES

- 4.1.1 The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved informally, often straight away by the class teacher, middle/senior leader or Head of School.
- 4.1.2 Schools should aim to ensure that parents feel able to raise concerns with staff during working hours without undue formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing.
- 4.1.3 Parents may not be clear at first that they are making a complaint. They may wish to ask a question or express an opinion. A preliminary discussion with school staff will usually clarify the issue and help parents to decide whether they wish to take the matter further.
- 4.1.4 A complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of services, facilities or activities, or actions or lack of action, by the school or its staff, affecting an individual or group.

The following are not complaints:

- A general enquiry
- A request for a service
- A request for information or clarification of a policy or practice
- Matters appropriate to be dealt with under other procedures, such as admissions/exclusions/whistleblowing etc
- Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use the school premises or facilities.

In some instances, e.g., where English may not be a parent's mother tongue language, it may be appropriate for a parent to be accompanied by an "advocate" to ensure full understanding of the concerns being raised.

## PROCEDURE

- 4.1.5 Parents should have an opportunity for informal discussion of their concerns with the appropriate member of staff. This discussion should aim to clarify the nature of parent's concern and assure them that the school wishes to hear about it. **The discussion should also aim to clarify what kind of outcome the parent is seeking.**
- 4.1.6 If the member of staff first contacted cannot deal with the matter immediately, s/he should make a firm arrangement to deal with it at a future date or refer the matter to the Head of School or another appropriate member of staff. In either case a note of the name, date and contact details of the complainant should be taken.
- 4.1.8 Principals should ensure that staff are aware of policy and are clear about when a matter is to be managed as a formal complaint.
- 4.1.9 If the concern relates to the Principal and the parent feels unable to raise it within the school, they should be advised to contact the Head of Education.
- 4.1.10 The staff member dealing with the complaint, should make sure that the complainant is clear about what will happen next (if anything). This should be put in writing to ensure there is a clear communication trail.
- 4.1.11 If no satisfactory solution has been found, the complainant should be informed about how they should proceed if they wish to take their complaint further. They should be informed of any advice and support that may be available to them.

## **4.2 Stage 2 – FORMAL COMPLAINT TO PRINCIPAL**

### **GUIDELINES**

- 4.2.1 The Principal needs to determine who has responsibility for responding to a formal complaint, including the decision about his/her own involvement at various stages.
- 4.2.2 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the action of the Principal, or the Principal has been very closely involved informally, the Head of Education should carry out all the Stage Two procedures, with support if necessary from QatarEnergy Human Resources.

### **PROCEDURE**

- 4.2.3 Parents who wish to pursue a formal complaint at Stage Two should be asked to put the complaint and their desired outcome in writing to the Principal. The Principal should acknowledge the complaint in writing within five working days of receipt, giving a brief explanation of the complaint's procedures and a target date for providing a response. Ideally, this should be within ten working days. If it is not possible to deal with the matter in this time, the complainant should be informed of when it is likely to be concluded.
- 4.2.4 The Principal (or a designated member of staff) may offer an opportunity for the complainant to meet him/her. The complainant should, if he/she wishes, be allowed to be accompanied by a friend or relative who can speak on his/her behalf. Interpreting facilities should be made available if required.
- 4.2.5 If necessary, the Principal (or a designated member of staff) should interview any witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres around a student, the student should also be interviewed, normally with a parent present. In some circumstances, this may not be possible or appropriate and a senior member of staff with whom the student feels comfortable should attend with him/her. If a member of staff is complained against, the staff member needs to be informed and the rights of that person should be borne in mind. Advice may need to be sought from QatarEnergy HR.
- 4.2.6 The Principal (or designated member of staff) should keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
- 4.2.7 Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Principal (or designated member of staff) should either write to the complainant or arrange a meeting to discuss or resolve the matter. This meeting should be followed up with a letter summarising the outcome of the meeting. The complainant should be advised in this letter that if they remain unhappy with the outcome, he/she may refer to the Head of Education.

### **4.3 Stage 3 – FORMAL COMPLAINT TO HEAD OF EDUCATION**

#### **PROCEDURE**

- 4.3.1 Parents who wish to pursue a formal complaint at Stage Three should be invited to put the complaint and their desired outcome in writing to the Head of Education. The Head of Education should acknowledge the complaint in writing within five working days of receipt giving a brief explanation of the complaint's procedures and a target date for providing a response. Ideally, this should be within ten working days. If it is not possible to deal with the matter in this time, the complainant should be informed of when it is likely to be concluded.
- 4.3.2 The Head of Education may offer an opportunity for the complainant to meet him/her. The complainant should, if she/he wishes, be allowed to be accompanied by a friend or relative who can speak on his/her behalf. Interpreting facilities should be made available if required.
- 4.3.3 If necessary, the Head of Education (or nominated alternates) should interview any witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres around a student, the student should also be interviewed, normally with parent present. In some circumstances, this may not be possible or appropriate and a senior member of staff with whom the student feels comfortable should attend with him/her. If a member of staff is complained against, the member needs to be informed and the rights of that person should be borne in mind. Advice may need to be sought from QatarEnergy HR
- 4.3.4 The Head of Education should keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
- 4.3.5 Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Head of Education, will either write to the complainant or arrange a meeting to discuss or resolve the matter. This meeting should be followed up with a letter summarising the outcome of the meeting. The complainant should be advised in this letter that if they remain unhappy with the outcome, he/she may seek a review by QatarEnergy Arbitration Committee.



#### **4.4 Stage 4 – Review by Arbitration Committee**

##### **GUIDELINES**

- 4.4.1 Complainants who are dissatisfied with the decision made at Stage 3 may request that a review by the Arbitration Committee is convened. The complainant should notify the Head of Education in writing, within five working days of receiving the letter detailing the outcome of the Stage 3 complaint, that they are dissatisfied and seek a hearing via the Arbitration Committee, this will be referred to VH.
- 4.4.2 Depending on the facts and circumstances of the case, VH may or may not approve further review of the complaint via Arbitration Committee. If VH approves further review of the complaint, an impartial Arbitration Committee shall be appointed to formally rule on the matter. If VH does not approve further review of the complaint the case shall be considered closed with no further appeals possible.
- 4.4.3 The Arbitration Committee will be established by VH and will comprise of three randomly selected employees and a non-voting Employee Relations facilitator from QatarEnergy.
- 4.4.4 The three voting members shall be independent from the school and also from the complainant's department if applicable. No member of the Arbitration Committee shall have any direct or indirect interest in the complaint under consideration. This will be verified by the non-voting Employee Relations facilitator.

##### **PROCEDURE**

- 4.4.5 The facilitator shall arrange meetings and ensure relevant documentation is available to each committee member prior to the meeting. The complainant will be invited to attend and state the reason for their complaint and the resolution they are seeking.
- 4.4.6 Members of the committee will have the opportunity to ask questions to ensure they have a complete understanding of the complaint. Witnesses may also be invited as relevant, by either the complainant or by the school.
- 4.4.7 The committee will decide as a group what additional information may be required in order to make a decision. The facilitator will provide the information the committee believes is required to make a fair and just decision.
- 4.4.8 The committee will vote on and decide on the question "Was school or Corporate policy and/or practice properly and consistently applied in the present case?"
- 4.4.9 The committee will provide the complainant and relevant senior managers with a written decision within twenty days from the date the complaint was first referred to the committee.
- 4.4.10 The decision of the Review Panel is final and binding and cannot be appealed within the Corporation.

## 5.1 APPENDICES

### 5.1.1 Appendix i

#### QatarEnergy SCHOOLS COMPLAINTS RECORD

School \_\_\_\_\_

| Complaint Number | Date Received | Date replied | Complainant details | Summary of the Complaint | Resolution and recommendations |
|------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                  |               |              |                     |                          |                                |
|                  |               |              |                     |                          |                                |
|                  |               |              |                     |                          |                                |
|                  |               |              |                     |                          |                                |
|                  |               |              |                     |                          |                                |

## 5.2. Appendix ii

### Guidance for Schools in Handling Unreasonably Persistent or Harassment Complaints

#### 5.2.1 What is meant by 'an unreasonably persistent complainant'?

An unreasonably persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint.

Unreasonable behaviour may include actions by the complainant which are:

- out of proportion to the nature of the complaint
- persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted
- personally, harassing or use abusive or threatening language
- unjustifiably repetitious
- deemed to be insistent on pursuing unjustified complaints
- deemed to have unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints

Unreasonable behaviour may also include complaints made in public or via Social Media or where a complainant refuses to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

#### 5.2.2 What is 'harassment'?

Harassment is regarded as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution.

Behaviour may fall within the scope of harassment if:

- it appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause
- it has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community

#### 5.2.3 Schools' responses to unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment

This guidance is intended to be used in conjunction with the QatarEnergy Schools Complaints Policy and Procedure. Taken together, these documents set out how QatarEnergy wishes to work with parents, and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty. However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all the following steps, as appropriate:

- inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach
- inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his/her behaviour to fall under the terms of this Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/ Harassment guidance

- require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken
- inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school will respond only to written communication and that these may be required to be channelled through QatarEnergy HR departments

5.2.4 Legitimate new complaints will always be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/ Harassment Guidance. The school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals' subject to this guidance.