

Complaints procedure

The Japanese School in London

Authorized by Head Teacher	July 2017
Approved by The School Running Committee	July 2017
Next Review	Apr 2019

Introduction: Parents and schools working together

Children of any age are more likely to be happy at school, and to achieve their best, if their parents take an active interest in their education and welfare during the time the child is in school.

We value the involvement of parents and care person in the operations of our school and offer many opportunities for you to take part in your child's education here, for example:

- Open Class Day and Demonstration Lessons (April, January)
- Parent-teacher consultation (May, November)
- Sports Day, Culture Day
- Open Day
- Open Class Day on Sunday
- Parents' Help (Swimming, School Trips, Outdoor Study)

It is natural that parents may, from time to time, be concerned about some aspect of their child's education or welfare at school. This may, for example, be due to a misunderstanding about the school's approach to aspects of the curriculum, or about the way we deal with behavioural problems. We therefore welcome enquiries from parents about these and other matters, and are confident that in the vast majority of cases, we can reassure you by explaining our policies and practices, and how they subsequently affect your child.

With a commitment from all concerned in resolving any such concerns calmly and rationally, we can work with you to try to achieve the most appropriate solution in your child's interests. You are welcome to see our school policies on our homepage. We can also provide you with the school prospectus if you wish, but a small charge will be incurred. Please enquire at the school office.

Expressing your concerns

Our policy and that of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan is that parental concerns and complaints should be dealt with locally, that is at school level, wherever possible. This is because we want to build and maintain good relations with you and to work with you to provide the best possible education for your child.

Wherever possible, we prefer to resolve any concerns informally, so as to make the best use of valuable time in supporting all the children in our care.

If, therefore, you have any concerns at all about your child's education or welfare at school, please speak to your child's class teacher in the first instance, or speak to the deputy head teacher. We will then explain what action we can take to help to resolve the problem.

From time to time, situations can arise where parents feel that they must state their concern more formally. The procedures set out in this document explain how we handle such cases.

As partners in your child's education, we all need to approach any difficulties calmly, and without aggression, so that we can work on the problem constructively together.

Our procedures for dealing with general concerns

The majority of concerns from parents, care person and others are handled under the following general procedures.

Stage 1 aims to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in school. Your child's class teacher or the deputy head teacher will be involved in it. When the concern is serious, other teachers such as a head teacher, a chief teacher or a supervisor of the primary or secondary school will be involved.

Stage 2 is the first formal stage at which written complaints are considered by the head teacher, who has special responsibility for dealing with complaints.

Stage 3 is the next stage once Stage 2 has been worked through. It involves a complaints review by the School Running Committee.

How each of these stages operates is explained as follows.

Stage 1 - Your initial contact with the school

1. Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you make them known to us. The first point of contact should be your child's class teacher or the deputy head teacher.
2. We will see you, or contact you by telephone or in writing, as soon as possible after your concern is made known to us. We will deal with the concern with sincerity. When the concern is particularly serious, other teachers such as a head teacher, a chief teacher or a supervisor of the primary or secondary school will be involved.
3. We will ensure that you are clear what action or monitoring of the situation, if any, has been agreed. We will confirm this in writing to you.
4. We will discuss with you (normally within ten working days) the progress of our enquiries. You will have the opportunity to ask for the matter to be considered further, once we have responded to your concern.
5. If you are still dissatisfied following this informal approach, your concern will become a formal complaint and we will deal with it at the subsequent stage.

Stage 2 - Formal consideration of your complaint

This stage in our procedures deals with written complaints. It applies where you are not happy with the informal approach to deal with your concern, as outlined under Stage 1 above.

1. Normally, your written complaint should be addressed to the head teacher. If, however, your complaint concerns the head teacher personally, it should be sent to the school marked "For the attention of the Chairman of School Running Committee."
2. We will acknowledge your complaint in writing within five days after receiving it.
3. We will enclose a copy of this procedural manual together with the acknowledgement.
4. Normally, we would expect to respond within two weeks but if this is not possible, we will write to explain the reason for the delay and inform you when a full response will be provided.
5. As part of our consideration of your complaint, we may invite you to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any details required. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to assist in explaining the reasons for your complaint.
6. The head teacher may also be accompanied by a suitable person if he/she wishes.
7. Following the meeting, the head teacher will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, we will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question.

8. We will normally talk to pupils with a parent or care person present, unless this would delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint, or where a pupil has specifically said that he or she would prefer the parent or care person not to be involved. In such circumstances, we will ensure that another member of staff, with whom the pupil feels comfortable, is present.
9. If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal procedures, as required by law.
10. The head teacher will keep written or typed, signed and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation.
11. Once we have established all the relevant facts, we will send you a written response to your complaint. This will give a full explanation of the head teacher's decision and the reasons for it. We may invite you to a meeting to discuss the outcome as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations with you.

Stage 3 - Further consideration of your complaint

If your concern has already been through Stages 1 and 2 and you are not happy with the outcome, we may agree to set up a meeting to consider the issues with a member and/or members of the School Running Committee and with at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters. This is a formal process, and the ultimate recourse at school level. The Chairman of the School Running Committee has the discretion to agree to this form of meeting where he or she feels it would be helpful in resolving the complaint.

1. Your written complaint should be addressed to the Chairman of the School Running Committee.
2. He / She will acknowledge your complaint in writing within five days after receiving it.
3. He / She will enclose a copy of this procedural manual together with the acknowledgement. Normally, we would expect to respond within two weeks, but if this is not possible he/she will write to explain the reason for the delay and let you know when he/she hopes to be able to provide a full response.
4. As part of his/her consideration of your complaint, he/she may invite you to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any details required. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to assist in explaining the reasons for your complaint.
5. The head teacher may also be accompanied by a suitable person if he/she wishes.
6. Following the meeting, the Chairman of the School Running Committee will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, he/she will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question.
7. The Chairman of the School Running Committee will normally talk to pupils with a parent or care person present, unless this would delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint, or where a pupil has specifically said that he or she would prefer the parent or care person not to be involved. In such circumstances, the Chairman of the School Running Committee will ensure that another member of staff, with whom the pupil feels comfortable, is present.
8. If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal procedures, as required by law.
9. The Chairman of School Running Committee will keep written and/or typed, signed and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation.

10. Once the School Running Committee has established all the relevant facts, they will send you a written response to your complaint. This will give a full explanation of the decision taken and the reasons for it.

Closure of complaints

Occasionally, a school and/or the School Running Committee will feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied. We and the School Running Committee will do all we can to help to resolve a complaint against the school but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the complainant's requirements. Sometimes it is simply a case of "agreeing to disagree". If a complainant persists in making representations to the school (to the head teacher, the School Running Committee or anyone else), this can be extremely time-consuming and can detract from our responsibility in looking after the interests of the children in our care. For this reason, we are entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable and relevant action to resolve the complaint.

Please address correspondence to:

The Japanese School in London
87 Creffield Road, Acton, London W3 9PU

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