COMPLAINT POLICY

Reviewed:	August 2026
Next Review Due:	July 2027
Applies To:	All staff, students and parents
Owner:	Head of School
Approved By:	Board of Directors

Mission, Vision and Values

Mission
To inspire our children to reach their full potential by fostering curiosity and an interest in learning, awakening their minds and illuminating their world.

Vision
To create an affordable international secondary school with a high standard of education where children learn through practical and project-based work. To develop our students' moral and intellectual capacity, and to encourage creativity and adaptability.

Aim
An education that is broad, balanced and challenging, with an emphasis on developing strong connections to our host country, Uganda.

Values
Desire for lifelong learning; an ability to adapt; be innovative and reflective thinkers; open minded, and empathetic while achieving high academic success according to individual potential

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1. Preamble

7Hills International School (7Hills) aims to create a safe, inclusive and nurturing environment where students are encouraged to grow academically, personally and socially. We work in partnership with families and the wider community, and we recognise that effective communication and fair, transparent resolution of concerns are essential to maintaining trust and wellbeing across the school community.

This policy provides:

- clear guidance on communication expectations
- accessible pathways for raising concerns
- a structured procedure for resolving complaints fairly, consistently and in line with CIS accreditation standards

The school distinguishes between informal concerns and formal complaints and aims, wherever possible, to resolve matters promptly and constructively at the lowest appropriate level.

This policy is not intended for workplace grievances raised by employees. Such matters are managed under the Staff Grievance Policy.

2. Communication Guidelines

7Hills promotes open, respectful and professional communication. Regular updates are provided through email, newsletters, EduPage, the school website and community briefings. Parents and students are encouraged to request meetings in advance to ensure adequate time and attention can be given.

Communication must remain courteous, culturally sensitive and collaborative. The school does not tolerate abuse, harassment, intimidation, or defamatory communication toward staff or students. Where necessary, restricted communication access may be applied to protect staff wellbeing and ensure a safe working environment.

Incidents of abusive behaviour must be reported to the Head of School and may result in:

- written warnings
- restricted channels of communication
- escorted campus access
- temporary exclusion from school grounds

Students and staff must never be placed at risk through communication conduct.

3. Communication Channels Overview

Routine enquiries should be addressed to the class teacher, subject teacher, programme coordinator or school office as appropriate. Urgent matters should be communicated through reception or by telephone. Formal concerns or complaints must be submitted in writing to the Head of School (or Chair of the Board where relevant).

The school will acknowledge enquiries and concerns within reasonable working timeframes. Complaints made during school holidays will be logged as received on the first school day following the break.

Issue Type	Preferred Channel	Expected Response Time
General enquiries	Email to school office	Within 2 working days
Academic progress	Email to subject teacher or coordinator	Within 2 working days
Urgent matters	WhatsApp or phone call to reception	Same day
Feedback or suggestions	Suggestion box or email to Head of School	As appropriate
Formal complaints	Email or letter to Head of School	See complaint procedure below

This policy is not intended to manage workplace grievances raised by employees relating to their employment, working environment, professional relationships or management decisions. Such matters are managed through the 7Hills Staff Grievance Policy. Employees are encouraged to seek informal resolution in accordance with the Conflict Resolution Policy before commencing the formal grievance procedure, where appropriate.

4. Complaints Procedure

- A **concern** is an expression of worry, clarification or misunderstanding which can normally be resolved informally through discussion with the relevant member of staff.
- A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction relating to a decision, action, process, service or behaviour which:
    - has not been resolved informally, or
    - involves a serious breach of policy, misconduct or safeguarding concern

Concerns should always be raised informally first, except where the nature of the issue requires immediate formal referral (e.g., safeguarding). Complaints should normally be raised within **two months** of the event or final incident in a series, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Anonymous complaints are generally not investigated unless there is a compelling safeguarding or welfare reason.

4.1 How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

Concerns should first be raised with the relevant teacher, Head of Phase, Senior Leader, or the Head of School, who will seek to resolve the matter. If unresolved, a formal complaint should be submitted using the template at the end of this policy. Complaints about staff (except the Head of School) go to the Head of School; complaints about the Head of School go to the Chair of Directors via the Secretary, marked **Private and Confidential**. Complaints about governors should also be sent to the Secretary.

We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure access to the procedure. Anonymous complaints are generally not investigated unless deemed necessary. Complaints should be made within two months of the incident (or the last in a series). Those received during school holidays will be recorded as received on the first school day after the break.

However, when occasional concerns and complaints arise, the following procedure will be followed:

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Concerns should first be raised with:

- the relevant teacher
- tutor or programme coordinator
- member of the leadership team

Every effort will be made to resolve matters through constructive dialogue. A short meeting may be arranged and a summary of actions or agreed outcomes recorded.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

If unresolved, the complainant may submit a written complaint to the Head of School. The written submission should include:

- a clear description of the concern
- key dates or context
- steps already taken to resolve the matter
- the outcome sought where appropriate

The school will:

- acknowledge receipt within 2 working days
- initiate investigation within 10 working days where possible

Where a complaint concerns the Head of School, it must be submitted to the Chair of the Board via the Clerk and marked *Private and Confidential*. Where a complaint concerns a Director, it must be referred to the Secretary.

Stage 3 – Investigation

The investigation will be impartial, confidential and fair to all parties.

It may include:

- interviews with relevant staff or students
- review of school records or assessment data
- consultation with pastoral or safeguarding teams

A written report will be prepared summarising findings and outcomes. Where safeguarding concerns arise, the case will immediately follow child protection procedures and may override the complaints timeline.

Stage 4 – Resolution
The complainant will receive a written response which may include:

- clarification or explanation
- actions taken or changes implemented
- mediation or restorative discussion
- confirmation that no breach was found

The outcome will be recorded in the formal complaints log.

Stage 5 – Appeal
If dissatisfied, the complainant may submit an appeal in writing to the Chair of the Board of Directors.

An Appeal Panel will:

- consist of governors without prior involvement
- review evidence and process fairness
- provide a final written decision

Where directors cannot participate objectively, an independent panel may be appointed.
The decision of the Board is final within the school process.

5. Confidentiality and Records
All complaints and related records will be handled confidentially and securely. Documentation will be retained in accordance with school policy and relevant data protection laws. The school maintains a log of formal complaints to monitor patterns and inform future improvements.

6. Safeguarding, Child Protection and Whistleblowing
Concerns relating to student safety, abuse or neglect and professional misconduct must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Safeguarding concerns are not handled under the complaints process and follow statutory procedures. Whistleblowing concerns raised in good faith will not result in retaliation.

7. Roles and Responsibilities
The roles of:

- complainant
- investigator
- complaints coordinator
- Clerk to the Board
- Committee Chair

are defined in line with international best practice to ensure procedural integrity, confidentiality and fairness. The Head of School remains the lead authority for school-level investigations. The Board of Directors provides independent review and accountability.

Role	Responsibility
Teachers/Staff	Address informal concerns where possible and refer unresolved matters to Coordinators
Year / Programme Coordinators	Support resolution at middle-leadership level; escalate where needed
Head of School & Leadership Team	Oversee formal complaints and investigations; ensure policy adherence
Board of Directors	Handle final appeals and ensure fairness and compliance

By following this policy, 7Hills International School ensures that concerns are addressed in a fair, transparent, and timely manner, upholding the rights and voices of all members of the school community.

8. Confidentiality, Records and Monitoring

Formal complaints are:

- securely recorded
- retained in line with data protection law
- monitored to identify patterns and areas for improvement

Only staff directly involved in the process may access complaint records.

9. Review and Policy Governance

This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if:

- legislation changes
- CIS standards are updated
- significant procedural learning occurs

The policy is available:

- on the school website
- in the school Google Drive
- in printed form upon request

Related policies include:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Whistleblowing
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Behaviour and Wellbeing Framework

10. Distribution and Access

This policy is available to all staff, students, and parents via the school website and on the school Google drive. Printed copies can be requested from the school office.

11. Related Policies

- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Staff Handbook / Code of Conduct

Appendix 1 -Formal Complaint Submission Form

This form should be used where a concern has not been resolved informally and the complainant wishes to submit a formal complaint under the school's Complaints Procedure.

Section A -Complainant Details

Name: _____

Relationship to the school (please tick):
☐ Parent / Guardian
☐ Student
☐ Staff Member
☐ External Community Member
☐ Other (please specify): _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Preferred method of contact:

☐ Email ☐ Telephone ☐ Written Letter

Section B -Student Details (if relevant)

Student Name: _____
Year Group: _____

Section C -Details of the Complaint

Please describe the complaint, including relevant dates, names of individuals involved, and any key events.

Section D -Steps Already Taken to Resolve the Matter Informally

Please outline who you have spoken to and the outcome of those discussions.

Section E -Supporting Evidence (if applicable)

☐ Emails
☐ Meeting notes
☐ Photographs
☐ Other (please specify): _____

Section F -Desired Outcome (optional)

Please state any outcome you believe may resolve the complaint.

Declaration

I confirm that the information provided in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

For Office Use Only

Date complaint received: _____
Received by: _____
Complaint Reference Number: _____
Stage logged: ☐ Formal Complaint ☐ Appeal

Appendix 2 - 7Hills International School - Complaint Investigation Record

Section A -Case Details

Complaint Reference Number: _____
Date Received: _____
Stage of Complaint:

☐ Formal Investigation
☐ Appeal Review Panel

Investigator Name: _____
Role: _____

Section B -Summary of Complaint

_____
_____
_____

Section C -Parties Involved

Complainant: _____
Student(s) involved (if applicable):
_____
Staff or witnesses consulted:
_____
_____
_____

Section D -Actions Taken

Meetings held / interviews conducted:
Date _____ With _____
Date _____ With _____
Evidence reviewed (list):
_____
_____
_____

Section E -Findings

Summary of key facts established:
_____
_____
Policy / procedures relevant to the case:
_____
_____

Section F -Outcome

☐ Complaint upheld in full
☐ Complaint upheld in part
☐ Complaint not upheld
Reasoning for decision:

Section G -Actions / Resolutions Agreed

☐ Clarification / explanation provided
☐ Practice / procedure amended
☐ Mediation offered
☐ Staff guidance issued
☐ No further action required
☐ Other:
Details:

Section H - Follow-Up & Review

Review meeting required? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Date (if applicable): _____
Monitoring responsibility assigned to:

Investigator Signature: _____ Date: _____
Head of School Approval (where applicable)**:**
Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3 - Appeal Panel Record & Procedure Sheet

Section A - Panel Details

Complaint Reference Number: _____

Date of Panel Hearing: _____

Panel Members:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Clerk to the Panel: _____

Conflict of interest declared? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(If yes, details) _____

Section B -Appeal Basis

Grounds for appeal submitted by complainant:

☐ Procedural irregularity

☐ Unfair or biased handling

☐ New significant evidence

☐ Disagreement with findings

Summary:

Section C - Hearing Format

Parties present:

☐ Complainant

☐ Companion (where applicable)

☐ School Representative

☐ Witnesses (if approved)

Panel confirms:

☐ Both parties received papers in advance

☐ Meeting conducted respectfully and fairly

☐ Equal opportunity to present evidence

Section D - Panel Consideration

The panel reviewed:

☐ Investigation process

☐ Evidence presented

☐ School policies

☐ Relevant legislation / standards

Key considerations:

Section E Decision

Panel Outcome:

☐ Appeal upheld in full

☐ Appeal upheld in part

☐ Appeal not upheld

Reason(s):

Section F - Panel Recommendations

☐ No further action

☐ Amend procedure / practice

☐ Provide apology / explanation

☐ Mediation recommended

☐ Further review required

☐ Other:

Details:

Section G - Notification

Decision communicated to complainant:

Date sent: _____

Format:

☐ Written letter ☐ Email

Copy provided to:

☐ Head of School

☐ Chair of Governors

☐ Relevant staff member (where appropriate)

Panel Chair Signature:		Date:	
Clerk Signature:		Date:	

Appendix 4 - Complaints Monitoring & Improvement Log

7Hills International School -Complaints Monitoring Log (Leadership Use)

(No personal names recorded in this log -confidential records are kept separately)

Reference No.	Date Received	Complaint Category	Area of School Life	Resolved At Stage	Outcome	Follow-Up Action	Completion Date
		☐ Teaching & Learning ☐ Behaviour ☐ Communication ☐ Pastoral ☐ Operations ☐ Other		☐ Informal ☐ Formal ☐ Appeal	☐ Upheld ☐ Partially ☐ Not upheld		

Leadership Reflection Notes
Patterns / themes observed:

Improvements implemented or recommended:

Policy / practice updates required:

Reviewed by: _____ Date: _____