



**CISK**  
CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL KUNSHAN  
昆山加拿大外籍人员子女学校

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# Complaints Procedure

## Canadian Internatioanl School Kunshan

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## Who can make a complaint

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to CISK about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

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

It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. CISK takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Head of School, or executive director, when HoS is not in place, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Head of School, will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, CISK will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

## How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or the relevant Vice Principal. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual members of the Board of Directors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.



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Complaints against school staff (except the Head of School) should be made in the first instance, to the Head of School via the school administration office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Vice Principal or Head of School should be addressed to the Board of Directors via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of the Board, any individual director or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

## Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head of School or Executive Director, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

## Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

## Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

## Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by CISK other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<p>Admissions to schools</p> <p>Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</p> <p>School re-organization proposals</p>	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organization proposals should be raised with the <b>Board of Directors</b>.</p>
<p>Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation.</p>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the School Counselor or the principal.</p>
<p>Exclusion of children from school (suspended or expelled)</p>	<p>You can ask the school’s governing body to overturn the exclusion if either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• your child has been excluded for more than 5 days (a suspension)</li> <li>• the exclusion means they’ll miss a public exam.</li> </ul> <p>If the exclusion is for 5 days or fewer (a suspension), you can still ask the governors to hear your views but they can’t overturn the Head of School’s decision.</p> <p><b>Challenging permanent exclusion (expelled)</b></p> <p>You’ll be invited to a review meeting with the school’s governors if your child has been permanently excluded. This will happen within 15 school days.</p>
<p>Staff grievances</p>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school’s internal grievance procedures.</p>
<p>Staff conduct</p>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school’s internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<p>Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities i.e. After School Activities (ASA)</p>	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>



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## Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, CISK wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained or will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology

## Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

### Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Head of School (unless they are about the Head of School), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing, or by telephone. The Head of School will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days. Within this response, the Head of School will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Head of School can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

*Note: The Head of School may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.*

During the investigation, the Head of School (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Head of School will provide a formal written response within five school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.



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If the Head of School is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions CISK will take to resolve the complaint.

The Head of School will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Head of School, or a member of the governing body, a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the Head of School or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school administration office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

## Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body’s complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within five school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within ten school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.



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If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from CISK available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local or partnership school e.g. Chengfeng Foreign Language School, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by legal representation.

*Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.*

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least five school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least five school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least five school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.



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The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and CISK with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within ten school days.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors. The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions CISK will take to resolve the complaint. The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.