

Delia Memorial School(Hip Wo)

Guidelines for Handling School Complaints

20130103

Contents

Foreword

Chapter I

Scope of Application

Chapter II

Guiding Principles of Complaint Handling

Chapter III

Complaint Handling Procedures

Chapter IV

Complaint Handling Arrangements

Chapter V

Review of Complaints

Chapter VI

Handling of Unreasonable Behaviour

Chapter VII

Conclusion

Appendix I

Complaints Relating to Daily Operations and Internal Affairs of Schools

Appendix II

Sample of Acknowledgement Letter (1)

Appendix III

Sample of Acknowledgement Letter (2)

Appendix IV

Sample of Complaint Record

Appendix V

Sample of Reply Card

Foreword

Building a culture of communication

Great importance has always been placed on education in Hong Kong. As the society advances, people know more about their own rights and have high expectation on schools accordingly. Schools are expected to provide quality education and nurture talent for the society. People also pay close attention to the quality of governance and the services provided by schools. School stakeholders, especially parents, attach great importance to the holistic development of students, and may from time to time make inquiries and give opinions and suggestions with regard to school performance. Therefore, it is vital for schools to maintain good communication with our stakeholders. While being aware of the importance of building various effective communication channels, our school will encourage parents, students and staff to make good use of these channels to express their opinions and feelings, so as to enhance mutual understanding and trust and avoid unnecessary confusing messages.

Handling complaints in a positive manner

Nowadays, people strive for excellence, efficiency and pay attention to accountability and transparency in our society. Even though school have established mechanism and communication channels in response to inquiries and opinions from different sectors, there may still be complaints against school for various reasons. Our school will positively deal with complaints, patiently listen to and understand the opinions and criticisms raised by complainants, and respond to them promptly or within an appropriate time frame. In fact, constructive opinions and reasonable complaints will be valued as they will help the school improve. Our school will also adopt an open attitude to embrace different views, review relevant policies, suggestions and measures to identify any room for improvement in order to ensure continual improvement of school administration. If any views/complaints arising from misunderstanding or insufficient communication are identified, school personnel will explain to complainants in a sincere and patient manner in order to remove their doubts. Despite that, school may sometimes face extremely unreasonable behaviours of some complainants, which may consume immense manpower or even hamper the operations or services of the school. As such, our school will formulate appropriate policies and measures to deal with such unreasonable behaviour to ensure their operations would not be adversely affected.

Chapter I Scope of Application

1.1 The principles, procedures and arrangements proposed in the Guidelines helps school handle complaints more effectively. The Guidelines apply to the handling of the following types of complaints about school lodged by parents, students or the public by whatever reasonable means including post, fax, email, telephone call or in person:

(i) Complaints about daily operations and internal affairs of school

- ◆ According to the spirit of school-based management, the Education Ordinance has authorised the School Management Committees (SMCs) with the power and responsibility to manage school; therefore, our school will in collaboration with our sponsoring bodies, formulate school-based mechanism and procedures for handling school affairs. Any complaints involving daily operations and internal affairs of school (see Appendix I for relevant examples) will be directly lodged to school by complainants for effective handling.
- ◆ Upon receipt of any complaints about daily operations and internal affairs of school from the public or referred from other organisations (such as Chief Executive’s Office, Legislative Council, Equal Opportunities Commission, District Council, Offices of Councillors or other government departments), EDB will seek consent of the complainant to refer the complaint to the relevant school for investigation and direct reply to the complainant. Without the consent of referral by the complainant, the case will not be handled by the school or EDB. If the complaint involves serious incidents or maladministration, regardless of the complainant’s disagreement to the referral, EDB may, on condition that no personal information will be disclosed, inform our school of the complaint for improvement of administration.
- ◆ EDB may conduct direct investigation of any complaints under special circumstances, e.g. complaints about misconducts of SMCs or malpractices of the school management.
- ◆ When handling complaints, our school will refer to relevant circulars, guidelines and codes of practice to ensure compliance of respective requirements, such as:
 - Complaints about child abuse: EDB Circular No. 1/2012 “Handling Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Cases”
 - Complaints about equal opportunities: EDB Circular No. 33/2003 “The Principle of Equal Opportunities”
 - Complaints about gender discrimination and sexual harassment: EDB Circular No. 2/2009 “Amendment to the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 480)”

- Complaints about race discrimination: EDB Circular No. 25/2008 “Race Discrimination Ordinance”
- Complaints about procurement of services and goods (such as school bus service, sale of textbooks and exercise books, meal charges, etc.): EDB Circular No. 15/2007 “Tendering and Purchasing Procedures in Aided Schools”, EDB Circular No. 24/2008 “Trading Operations in Schools” and Corruption Prevention Best Practice “Governance and Internal Control in Schools” and “The Integrity Management for Schools – A Practical Guidebook for School Staff” issued by the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC)
- Complaints about acceptance of advantages and donations: EDB Circular No. 14/2003 “Acceptance of Advantages and Donations by Schools and their Staff”

(ii) Complaints about Education Ordinance, education policies or services provided by EDB

- ◆ EDB is responsible for formulating education policies, enforcing the Education Ordinance and providing education services. If the complaints involve the following aspects, even the incidents involved do not take place in school, they should be lodged to EDB for direct handling:
 - Complaints about education policies (e.g. class structure and class size);
 - Complaints about suspected contravention of Education Ordinance (e.g. corporal punishment, teacher registration) or Codes of Aid (e.g. exorbitant charges, expulsion of students); or
 - Complaints about services directly provided by EDB (e.g. school places allocation, services provided by Regional Education Offices).
- ◆ EDB will also draw reference to relevant internal guidelines in handling the aforesaid complaints.

1.2 The Guidelines are not applicable to the following types of complaints:

- ◆ Complaints relating to ongoing legal proceedings;
- ◆ Complaints under the jurisdiction of other organisations/government departments;
- ◆ Complaints governed by other ordinances or legal requirements, such as complaint about corruption, fraud and theft; or
- ◆ Complaints lodged by school staff [handled in accordance with school-based or sponsoring bodies’ staff complaint mechanism and guidelines (if applicable)]

1.3 In general, the following types of complaints will not be handled by school:

(i) Anonymous complaint

- ◆ If a complaint is made in written form or in person, the complainant should provide his name, address/e-mail address and phone number. If in doubt, the school will require the complainant to show his identity documents. If the complainant fails or refuses to provide the above personal particulars, the school will not be able to conduct investigation and give a written reply to the complainant. Such cases will be deemed as anonymous complaints and will not be handled by the school. Under special circumstances (e.g. sufficient evidence available or the complaint involves serious or emergency cases), the middle or senior management of the school will decide if it is necessary to follow up with an anonymous complaint, e.g. taking it for internal reference, informing the subject of complaint or taking relevant remedial improvement measures. If follow-up actions are considered unnecessary, brief reasons will be stated before filing the complaint for record.

(ii) Complaints not made personally by the person concerned

- ◆ Generally speaking, complainants will bring forward their grievance in person. In case the aggrieved person is a minor or intellectually disabled, his parents/guardians or the person authorised by the parents/guardians may lodge a complaint on his behalf. If the aggrieved person is an adult, other persons can only complain on behalf of him with his prior written consent.
- ◆ If a complaint is lodged by more than one person on behalf of the aggrieved one, the aggrieved person will be required to designate a representative as the contact person with the school.
- ◆ As for complaints lodged/referred by other organisations/groups, such as Legislative councillors, district councillors, the trade union, the media, since there are no current legislations which empower any organisation/group to complain on behalf of someone, school/sponsoring bodies will specify in the school-based mechanism whether to accept such kind of complaints. Our school will handle the complaint in accordance with our prescribed procedures if the organisation/group has obtained prior written authorisation from the person concerned.

(iii) Complaints involving any incidents which occurred more than one year

- ◆ Complaints related to daily operations of our school will normally

be lodged within the same school year. If the incident involved occurred more than one year, it would be difficult for the school to collect evidence for investigation as the objective environment/evidence might have been changed or disappeared; or the person concerned/the target of complaint had quitted the school already. To allow greater flexibility, the time limit for lodging a complaint will be set within one calendar year.

- ◆ Even the incident involved happened more than one year ago, the school will decide whether to conduct an investigation under special circumstances, e.g. there is sufficient evidence available, or the complaint is concerned about serious and urgent matters.

(iv) Complaints with insufficient information

School will require the complainant to provide concrete evidences regarding the case for investigation. If the complainant fails to provide sufficient information to facilitate an investigation, school will refuse handling the relevant complaint.

Chapter II Guiding Principles of Complaint Handling

2.1 In handling school-related complaints made by parents, students or the public, our school will refer to the following guiding principles:

Principle I: Handling by due responsible parties

2.2 To help better understand the complainant's concern and facilitate effective response thereto, a complaint will be directly handled by the organisation which formulates the related policies, provides the related services or manages the persons/matters being complained. As such, complaints relating to daily operations and internal affairs of our school will be handled by school; while those complaints about Education Ordinance, education policies or EDB services will be handled by EDB; and those involving other laws of Hong Kong will be lodged to relevant law enforcement agencies (e.g. ICAC, Hong Kong Police Force or Equal Opportunities Commission, etc.) for handling.

2.3 Where a complaint involves both school and EDB, it will be followed up by the relevant school(s) and related section(s) of EDB respectively.

Principle II: Timely Handling

2.4 For all inquiries, opinions or complaints, whether made in verbal or written form, our school will handle them promptly and reply as soon as possible to avoid the situation being aggravated. When receiving any inquiries/complaints, the frontline staff will handle them straight or refer to the designated officer/committee for timely handling. If the frontline officer cannot resolve the problem, he will solicit assistance from his seniors.

2.5 If an incident is referred or reported by the media, our school will adopt the following measures:

- ◆ To appoint a spokesman (e.g. the vice-principal / department head) to handle inquiries from the public/the media so as to avoid giving confusing message to the public.
- ◆ To make appropriate responses or clarifications to the public as soon as possible (within one or two days), including disclosing the actions taken or preliminary investigation result, and ensure that the information provided is clear, accurate and in line with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance.
- ◆ To inform all teaching staff, students and parents of the progress of the case as far as possible, and pay special attention to the emotional reaction of students and staff. Appropriate counselling services will be provided

if necessary.

Principle III: Clear and transparent mechanism

2.6 Our school will, in collaboration with our sponsoring bodies, set up clear and effective school-based mechanism and procedures to handle inquiries and complaints. Teachers and parents will be consulted to ensure that relevant procedures are accepted by stakeholders.

2.7 Our school will prepare clear guidelines informing stakeholders of relevant policies, procedures and responsible persons. Parents and staff will be informed of related procedures through various open channels, such as school websites, circulars, student handbook, staff meetings, parent-teacher meetings, seminars and school events.

2.8 Our school will try our best to ensure that all staff responsible for handling inquiries and complaints are familiar and comply with the relevant policies and guidelines.

2.9 The relevant policies and guidelines will be regularly reviewed and the handling procedures will be updated whenever necessary.

Principle IV: Fair and impartial handling

2.10 Our school will positively face complaints and fairly treat the complainants and the persons being complained. Sufficient appeal channels will be provided and if necessary, school will consider inviting independent persons to participate in the complaint/appeal handling.

2.11 Before investigation or under appropriate circumstances, the designated officer and persons concerned will declare interests. If there is any conflict of interest, the relevant persons will avoid handling the case or accessing any information relating to the case.

2.12 To avoid conflict of interest, the subject(s) of the complaint will not be involved in the handling of the case or supervising the investigation, or signing any letters to the complainant.

2.13 Our school will ensure that the rights of the complainants or other related persons who had filed/involved in the complaint and their future communication/contact with the school would not be affected.

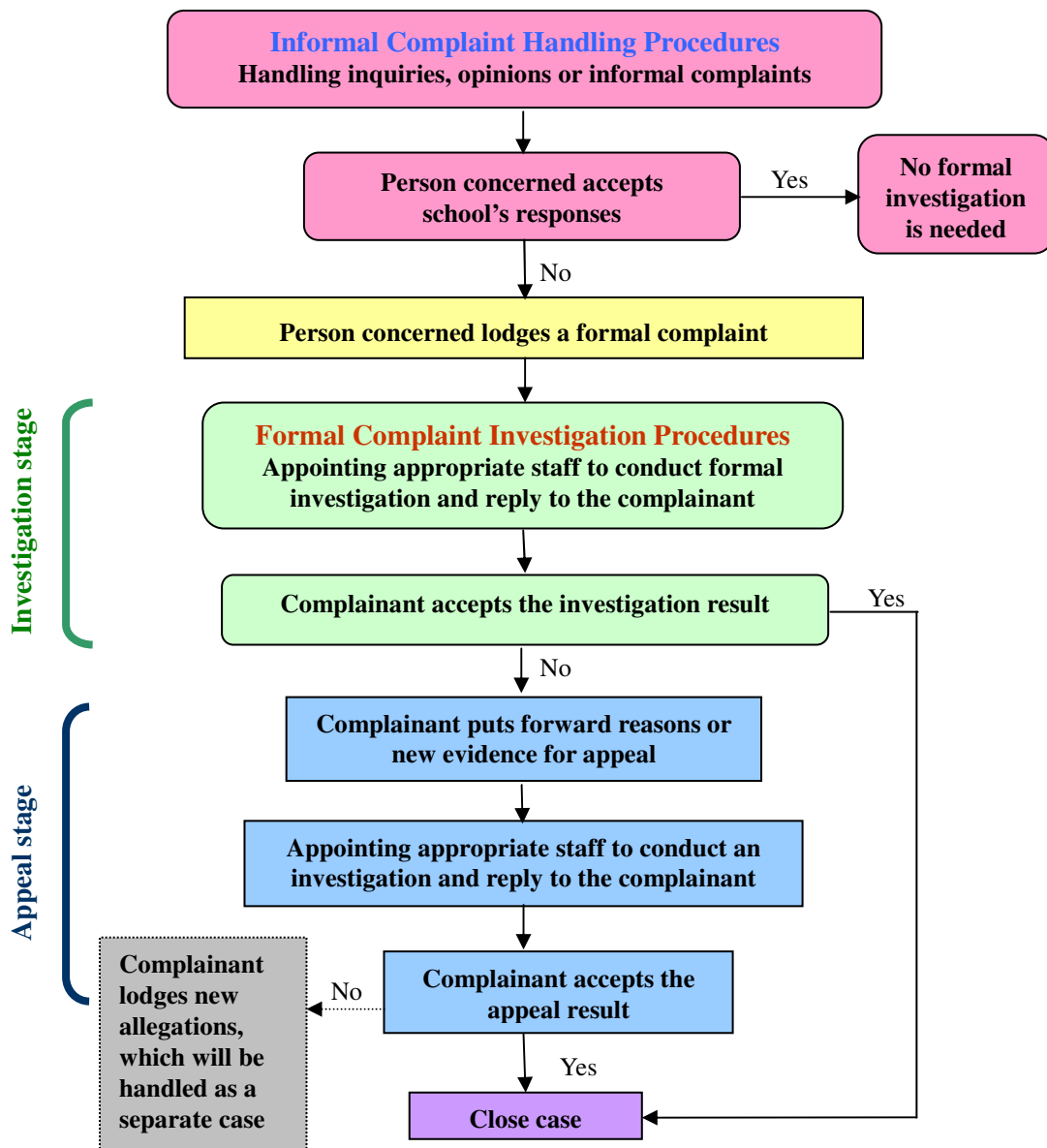
Chapter III Complaint Handling Procedures

Interpretations

3.1 To avoid complicating the handling process, frontline staff of our school will carefully differentiate between concerns and complaints. A concern means that parents make inquiries or express opinions to the school for the interest of themselves/their children or the school with a view to changing or improving the existing situation. A complaint means expressing one's disappointment, dissatisfaction or resentment, and requiring school to make rectification, take disciplinary actions against the suspected offenders or seek solutions. The responsible staff will avoid mixing up concerns and complaints and adopt appropriate procedures to handle them.

3.2 In general, unless the relevant person(s) insist on making a formal complaint, the responsible staff can provide them with prompt assistance or resolution by using the informal handling procedures. Please refer to Diagram 1 for the complaint handling procedures in school.

Diagram 1: Complaint Handling Procedures in School



Informal Complaint Handling Procedures

Immediate/prompt handling

3.3 If inquiries or complaints can be timely and appropriately handled, it can remove misunderstandings, eliminate crises or enhance the image of the school. The following arrangements will be made:

- ◆ If the school receives any inquiries, opinions or informal complaints from the public, whether in verbal or written form, the frontline staff will distinguish the nature of the incident before taking appropriate measures. In general, if evidence collection and investigation are deemed not necessary or the person(s) concerned do not ask for a formal written reply, the frontline staff will handle the matter in accordance with specified

informal complaint handling procedures of the school.

- ◆ Frontline staff will carefully listen to the concerns of the inquirer / complainant and understand what they think and need. If the incident is not serious, assistance and necessary information will be provided as far as possible to address their concerns and resolve their problems.
- ◆ If necessary, the on-duty administrative staff will, through direct talks or interviews with the person(s) concerned, relay the school' stance, clear misunderstandings and remove any misgivings or worries.
- ◆ School will, according to our own situation, set the time limit (in general: within two working days) for an initial response.
- ◆ If necessary, the on-duty administrative will seek support by referring the case to a designated or senior officer for prompt follow up and resolution. The principal will decide whether to take up the handling of the case depending on the situation of the school and the nature of the case.

Replying complaints

3.4 For verbal inquiries/opinions/complaints, verbal replies will be sufficed. For cases that have been handled according to the informal complaint handling procedures, written replies are normally not required. However, the person in charge will depending on the situation, e.g. the opinions/complaints are sent in written form or the school needs to make clear its stance/details accordingly, decide whether a simple written reply to the person(s) concerned/complainant is needed.

Complaints record

3.5 Cases handled through the informal complaint handling procedures normally do not require formal written records. If relevant inquiries/complaints have been answered or resolved instantly, the designated officer or the principal is suggested to record the key points in a school record for future reference.

Appropriate follow-up

3.6 Our school will review whether relevant policies or procedures have been properly followed and suggest appropriate measures to improve the handling of similar cases or avoid similar cases from happening again in the future. If necessary, the person in charge will inform the parties concerned on the follow-up actions to be taken and the conclusion of the school.

Formal Complaint Investigation Procedures

Arrangements for investigation and appeal stages

3.7 Despite the efforts to resolving the problems by the informal complaint handling procedures, if the school still cannot address the complainant's concerns or resolve the problems, or the school's response is not accepted by the complainant, the formal complaint investigation procedures (including an appeal mechanism) will be

launched to handle the case.

(i) Investigation stage

Our school will carry out investigation according to the following procedures if formal complaints (including those referred by EDB or other organisations) are received:

- ◆ According to the school-based mechanism, assign an appropriate staff to investigate the complaint and reply to the complainant.
- ◆ Acknowledge receipt of the relevant complaint, seek the complainant's consent to obtain his personal data and information relevant to the complaint, and inform him of the name, post title and phone number of the staff responsible for handling the case for contact purpose. Samples of Acknowledgement Letters can be found in Appendixes 2 and 3.
- ◆ Contact or arrange interviews with the complainant and other person(s) concerned to learn more about the situation or ask the person(s)/organisation concerned to provide information, if necessary.
- ◆ Handle the complaint timely. School are suggested to complete investigation within two months after receiving a complaint and send a written reply to the complainant, informing him of the investigation result.
- ◆ If the complainant accepts the investigation result, the complaint case can be closed.
- ◆ If the complainant does not accept the investigation result or the way of handling by the school, and is able to provide new evidences or sound reasons, he will, within 12 working days(including Saturday) from the date of the school's reply, lodge an appeal against the school's decision in writing.

(ii) Appeal stage

If the school accepts an appeal case, the following procedures will be adopted:

- ◆ According to the school-based appeal mechanism, assign an appropriate staff who is at a higher rank than the person-in-charge of the investigation or an officer from a different section to handle the appeal and reply to the complainant.
- ◆ Handle the relevant appeal timely. School are suggested to complete investigation within two months after receiving the request for appeal and inform the complainant of the appeal result in a written reply.
- ◆ If the complainant accepts the appeal result, the case can be closed
- ◆ If the complainant does not accept the appeal result or the way the school handle the appeal, the school will cautiously review the handling procedures again to ensure that they have been properly followed.

- ◆ If the complainant raises other new allegations, the our school will handle them separately in order to avoid entangling of old and new complaints.

Mediation service

3.8 In handling complaints, school will, as the case will be, decide whether it is appropriate to seek assistance from mediator(s) or invite independent persons/professionals to provide fair comments to assist the persons concerned (including the complainant(s) and the person(s)/organisation(s) being complained) so that conflicts or disputes can be resolved quickly.

Responding to complaints/appeals

3.9 Written complaints or appeals will be replied in written form. If they are made verbally, the responsible staff will decide whether to respond in verbal or written form. If a case is referred by EDB/other organisation(s), the investigation result will be copied to EDB/relevant organisation(s) for information.

3.10 Generally speaking, the time limit for a reply will, as the case will be, start counting from the date on which the complaint was received or the complainant agreed to let the school access his personal data. In case the school requires the complainant to submit further information, the time limit will start counting from the date on which the school receives the required information. If a reply cannot be given within the specified period, the school will issue a letter explaining to the complainant the reasons for longer handling time of the complaint/appeal.

Complaint/appeal record

3.11 Our school will keep clear records of cases handled through the formal complaint investigation procedures. A sample of complaint record is given in Appendix IV. Our school will establish a complaint record management system to keep relevant information (including correspondences, investigation reports, interview records, etc.). Our school will also keep the statistics of complaint and appeal cases being handled by informal or formal complaint handling procedures for future reference.

Appropriate follow-up

3.12 At the end of the investigation/appeal stage, our school will review whether relevant policies and handling procedures are appropriate, and suggest proper measures for improving the way of handling and avoiding recurrence of similar cases. The staff in charge will inform the person(s) concerned of the follow-up actions and conclusion of the school.

Chapter IV Complaint Handling Arrangements

Designated staff

4.1 According to the school-based inquiry/complaint handling mechanism, nature of the complaints and personnel and scope involved, school will assign a designated staff or set up a task force to handle complaints. Reference will be made to the following arrangements:

- ◆ Persons responsible for handling the investigation and appeal stages will be different. In principle, the person-in-charge of the appeal stage will be in a higher rank than the one responsible for the investigation. If the real situation does not permit, our school will make other arrangements, such as appointing a person from another department to re-investigate the case to ensure fair handling.
- ◆ Where necessary, school/sponsoring bodies will establish a task force to handle special complaint cases. Depending on the situation, the task force will include SMC members and representatives from the sponsoring bodies. To enhance credibility, the school will invite independent person(s) such as social worker, lawyer, psychologist, parent or teacher who are not involved in the case to join the task force to provide professional advice and support.
- ◆ Relevant staff will be proactive in communicating with the inquirer/complainant, provide information they needed and respond promptly to them. Our school will ensure that frontline/designated staff have proper authorisation and clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.
- ◆ For arrangements of respective person(s)-in-charge of various complaint handling stages, school will refer to the examples in the table below:

Targets involved	Example	Investigation stage	Appeal stage
Teaching and school staff	1	Senior teacher	Vice Principal / Department Head
	2	Vice Principal	Principal
	3	Principal	SMC
Principal	1	SMC	Designated staff#
	2	SMC Investigation Task Force*	Supervisor / SMC Appeal Task Force*
Supervisor / SMC		Designated staff# / Task force	Task force of sponsoring body / Designated Staff#

Designated staff could be the staff or person-in-charge of the education office of the sponsoring body.

* If a complaint involves the Principal, the SMC investigation/appeal task force will include independent

persons/managers.

Confidentiality

4.2 All contents and information of complaints will be kept strict confidential and restricted to internal reference/responsible persons only.

4.3 When handling complaints, if school have to collect personal data or they receive request for collection of relevant data/records in respect of the complaint case, they will observe the relevant requirements and recommendations in Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, including clearly stating the purpose and methods of personal data collection and indicating that relevant data will only be used for handling complaints or appeals. School will refer to relevant provisions in Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486) and the webpage of Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data at <http://www.pcpd.org.hk/chinese/ordinance/ordglance.html>.

4.4 Our school will adopt appropriate security measures to protect personal data and privacy, such as keeping the data at safe places (like cabinets under lock). Computer data will be protected with passwords. The use of portable data storage devices will be under restriction and if necessary, using encrypted portable data storage devices.

4.5 Our school will establish procedures to ensure that only authorised persons can access relevant information. The responsible persons will not disclose nor discuss any contents or information relating to the case in public without authorisation.

4.6 For interview or meeting with relevant parties, to avoid misunderstanding, the school will:

- ◆ In making arrangement for an interview/a meeting, state clearly whether the person concerned can be accompanied by others (for example, relatives, legal representatives) and reiterate such stances before the interview/meeting begins.
- ◆ Before the interview/meeting, clarify whether audio/video recording is permitted during the process or consent by all parties attending the meeting will be obtained first. The message will be reiterated before the end of the interview/meeting.

Follow-up and evaluation

4.7 Our school will conduct a comprehensive review on the strategies, procedures and steps taken in handling complaints so as to gain benefit from the experiences and improve the handling measures in order to avoid reoccurrence of similar cases in

future.

4.8 To enhance the standard of professional services, our school will implement appropriate follow-up measures for improvement of services or revision of relevant policies.

4.9 Our school will regularly review the school-based complaint handling policy, report to the SMCs the situation on handling complaints, such as providing the data of relevant complaint/appeal cases, and if necessary, suggest improvement measures to enhance the school-based complaint handling mechanism and procedures.

Chapter V Review of Complaints

5.1 Most school-related complaints can be settled through the informal and formal complaint handling procedures. Some complaints may remain unsettled after the investigation and appeal stages. Complainants or relevant organisations (including school/EDB) may request the “School Complaints Review Board” (Review Board)² established by EDB to review complaint cases under the following circumstances:

- ◆ The complainant provides substantial ground(s) or new evidences which show that the school/EDB has handled the case improperly.
- ◆ The complainant refuses to accept the investigation result and continues to complain despite that the relevant organisation has properly handled the complaint according to the established procedures.

5.2 The complainant will be informed that if he does not accept the appeal result or the way the complaint is being handled, a written review request can be filed with EDB within 14 days from the date of the reply by school. EDB will forward the case to the Review Board for handling. The person who requests for a review will provide substantial supportive reasons or new evidences for consideration of the Review Board on whether to conduct a review on the case or not.

Review procedures will ne carry out by EDB

Chapter VI Handling of Unreasonable Behaviour

6.1 In general, contacts between complainants and our school will not be restricted because proper communication and mediation help remove misunderstanding. However, sometimes unreasonable behaviour of complainants will bring adverse influence on the school concerned, including consuming immense manpower in handling, interrupting school operations or services as well as threatening the safety of the responsible staff and other stakeholders. School will formulate appropriate policies and measures to handle such unreasonable behaviour to ensure smooth operation and proper use of public funds for providing quality education services.

Definition of unreasonable behaviour

6.2 The unreasonable behaviour of complainants can generally be classified into the following three categories:

- (i) Unreasonable attitudes or behaviour, such as:
 - ◆ Violence or intimidation.
 - ◆ Making complaints with abusive or insulting words.
 - ◆ Providing false data or deliberately concealing facts.
- (ii) Unreasonable demands, such as:
 - ◆ Requiring large amounts of data or special treatment.
 - ◆ Frequent telephone calls asking for dialogue, interview or specifying certain person(s) to reply.
 - ◆ Requesting to meet with certain person(s) at a certain time and place.
- (iii) Unreasonable vexatious complaints, such as:
 - ◆ After relevant investigation, firmly opposing to the explanations and findings of the school/EDB, and/or persistently requiring the school/EDB to discipline certain person(s).
 - ◆ In respect of the same case, making repeated complaints or presenting similar grounds as previous ones but failing to provide new evidences.
 - ◆ In respect of the same case, keep on lodging new points of allegation or new complaint targets, but failing to present concrete evidences.
 - ◆ Interpreting things with unreasonable or irrational attitudes, or badgering about trivial details.

Formulating school-based policy

6.3 School will consider formulating appropriate policy and measures against complainants' unreasonable behaviours:

- ◆ Generally speaking, the principal will make such decisions. If the complaint is lodged against the principal, such decisions will be made by the school supervisor or the SMC.
- ◆ The school will include policy against complainants' unreasonable behaviours in complaint handling mechanism and consult stakeholders' views.
- ◆ All stakeholders will be informed of the school's policy on unreasonable behaviours.

Handling of unreasonable behaviours

6.4 While formulating policies and measures against complainants' various unreasonable behaviours, school will take the following suggestions into consideration:

(i) Unreasonable attitudes or behaviours

- ◆ Any unreasonable attitudes or behaviours, including violence, intimidation, abusive/offensive behaviours or language, either expressed in person or via telephone/written forms, are unacceptable. The responsible staff will state clearly that they cannot accept such unreasonable attitudes or behaviour and demand the person to change his attitudes or stop such behaviours. If the person concerned insists on doing so, the responsible staff will, after giving sufficient warning, stop the meeting or communication with the complainant.
- ◆ Our school will formulate contingency measures and guidelines to remind responsible staff to keep alert and take suitable measures to protect themselves. Our school will empower the responsible staff to, as the case will be, terminate the interview or communication with the complainant and ask the person to leave the meeting place if his behaviours pose immediate threat to or infringe the vital interests of the staff. Under urgent and necessary situation, the school will take appropriate/critical actions, such as reporting to the police or taking legal actions.

(ii) Unreasonable requirements

- ◆ If a complainant raises unreasonable demands which will bring adverse impact to the school, for example, interrupting school's operation/services or affecting other stakeholders, the school will consider restricting contact with the complainant by specifying the times, frequency, date, time slot and ways of communication with the school (for example, making prior appointment is required before visiting the school, expressing views in written form only, contact with designated staff, etc.). The school will notify the complainant of

relevant arrangements and handling procedures by written notice.

- ◆ If the complainant's behaviour improves, the school will consider whether relevant restrictions will be continued. If the school decides to continue with the measures, it will review the restriction criteria regularly.

(iii) Unreasonable vexatious complaints

- ◆ In dealing with unreasonable vexatious complaints, the school can decide whether to restrict/stop the contact with the complainant and cease handling the case if it has already been carefully examined and properly handled by the school and an objective and a detailed written explanation has been given to the complainant regarding the result of the investigation which followed the specified investigation and appeal procedures.
- ◆ To avoid unreasonable expectations of the complainant, the school will affirm him that a final decision has been made regarding the case and such decision is irreversible.
- ◆ In case of unreasonable repeated complaints, the school will send a "Reply Card" to the complainant, asking him to refer to the previous replies given by the school, and reiterate that the school will not respond to the same complaint or contact the complainant again. Please see Appendix V for a sample of the "Reply Card".

Chapter VII Conclusion

Effective school-based mechanism

7.1 To ensure that public inquiries/complaints are properly handled, our school will, according to our own conditions and the needs of stakeholders, establish a set of school-based complaint handling mechanism and procedures, which will:

- ◆ Be clear and unequivocal
- ◆ Be open and transparent
- ◆ Be concise and easy to follow
- ◆ Be fair and just
- ◆ Observe confidentiality
- ◆ Ensure continual improvement

7.2 An effective school-based complaint handling mechanism not only increases public confidence in school governance, but also prevents public opinions/inquiries from evolving into formal complaints or unnecessarily escalating to EDB or other government departments/organisations.

Maintaining good communication

7.3 In addition to formulating an effective complaint handling mechanism, our school will enhance communication with parents and staff for maintaining a close partnership with them. Members of the Parent-Teacher Associations may also serve as a bridge of communication between the school and parents by helping to explain to parents the school policies, relieving their discontented sentiments, and serving the role as a mediator when necessary. In addition, our school will listen to the views of the sponsoring bodies and stakeholders to identify any room for improvement of the school-based inquiry/complaint handling mechanism and procedures with a view to enhancing the standard of professional services provided by the school.

Complaints Relating to Daily Operations and Internal Affairs of School

Scope	Particulars
Management and Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School accounts (e.g. accounting records) • Other charges (e.g. extra-curricular activities charges and registration fee) • Policies (e.g. reward and penalty systems, school suspension arrangements) • Contractor services standard (e.g. school bus service, meal box supply) • Service contracts (e.g. tendering procedures) • School environment and hygiene (e.g. noise, mosquitoes problem)
Learning and Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-based curriculum (e.g. teaching hours of different subjects) • Selection of subjects and class allocation (e.g. arrangement for student choice of subject) • Homework (e.g. homework amount, school-based assessment standards) • Students assessment (e.g. assessment standards) • Staff performance (e.g. teaching staff behaviours/attitudes, job performance)
School Ethos and Student Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School ethos (e.g. uniform, appearance) • Home-school cooperation (e.g. consultation mechanism, communication channels) • Student support (e.g. support for special educational needs) • Extra-curricular activities (e.g. interest group or activity arrangements)
Student Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' overall performance (e.g. academic performance, conduct) • Student discipline (e.g. abusive language, smoking, fighting, bullying)

Appendix II

Sample of Acknowledgement Letter (1)

[For cases where complainants have provided their personal particulars and no referral is needed.]

DD MM YYYY

Name of the complainant

Address of the complainant

Dear Mr/Ms *XX:

We have received your written/verbal* complaint on DD MM YYYY. The case is being investigated and a reply will be sent to you within XX days / as soon as possible.

If you have any inquiries, please call Mr/Ms X (Teacher/Senior Teacher/Vice Principal*) at XXXXXXXX (telephone number).

(Signature)

Principal of XXXXXXX School /

Name and post
of the designated officer*

* Please delete where inappropriate

Sample of Acknowledgement Letter (2)

[Referral of the complaint to third parties (e.g. relevant government departments or contractors of school services) is needed.]

DD MM YYYY

Name of the complainant

Address of the complainant

Dear Mr/Ms* XX:

We have received your written/verbal* complaint on DD MM YYYY. For the purpose of investigation and follow-up, please fill in the reply form attached, and send it to the school before DD MM YYYY. We will reply to you when the investigation is completed.

If you have any inquiries, please call Mr/Ms X (Teacher/Senior Teacher/Vice Principal*) at XXXXXXXX (telephone number).

(Signature)

Principal of XXXXXXX School /
Name and post
of the designated officer*

* Please delete where inappropriate

Sample of Acknowledge Letter (2)
Reply Form

To: Name of School

File No.: (if applicable)

Name of the complainant: Mr/Ms _____

[Please write the name borne on your HK I.D. Card]

Correspondence Address: _____

Contact No.: _____

I understand that the personal information provided above will only be used for investigating the complaint.

To assist the school in handling this complaint, I agree that:

1. The school may copy the complaint and other information I presented, and transfer the copies to relevant persons/ organisations; and
2. The school may ask relevant persons/organisations for my personal information and other information related to this complaint.

Date

Signature of the complainant

Fields must be completed.

Sample of Complaint Record

Date received _____

Source: Directly lodged to the school
 Referred by EDB
 Referred by other organisations: _____

Mode: Phone Letter Email Fax In person
 Others: _____

Personal information of the complainant:

Name: Mr/Ms/Mrs _____

Identity: Parent Councillor Public
 Organisation _____
 Others _____

 Authorised representative of the complainant (please state the name, address and contact telephone number of the representative and his relation with the complainant):

Tel: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

Subject(s) of complaint:

Principal Teacher Office staff
 Others: _____

Nature of Complaint:

Management and Organisation Learning and Teaching
 School Ethos and Student Support Student Performance
 Others _____

Summary of complaint:

Investigation stage

Person-in-charge _____

Issuing Notice of Acknowledgement (date: _____)

Telephone contact (date: _____)

Interview(s) with the complainant (date: _____)

Issue of written reply (date: _____)

Summary of investigation findings:

Appeal stage (if applicable)

Date of appeal: _____

Person-in-charge: _____

Issue of Notice of Acknowledgement (date : _____)

Telephone contact (date : _____)

Interview with the complainant (date: _____)

Issue of written reply (date: _____)

Summary of appeal result:

Follow-up actions or recommendations (if applicable)

Signature of person-in-charge: _____

Sample of Reply Card

DD MM YYYY

Name of the complainant

Address of the complainant

Dear Mr/Ms* XX:

We have received your letter dated DD MM YYYY. As our views on the complaints you lodged have been detailed in our reply/replies sent to you dated DD MM YYYY [and dates of other replies (if applicable)], we will not respond to or contact you in respect of this complaint further.

(Signature)

Principal

XXXXXXXXXX School/

Name and post of the designated officer*

* Please delete where inappropriate