



SCHOOL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS PROCEDURE  
(ABRIDGED VERSION)

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## **Part 1: General Principles of Complaints and Compliments.**

### **1. Definitions**

#### **1.1 Definition of a complaint**

‘A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction (whether written or spoken) by an individual or group of people that the School (or bodies/agencies acting on its behalf) has failed to do something it should have done or done something badly or they feel they have been unfairly treated.’

The above definition would include:

- Failure to provide a service which the School is required to or has decided to deliver
- Neglect or delay in responding to a request within specified timescales
- Failure to follow agreed School policies, rules or procedures
- Failure to fulfill statutory responsibilities
- Unhelpful attitude of an employee (please note that Language Cafe has its own Disciplinary and Procedure)
- Malice, bias or discrimination

#### **1.2 What is not a complaint**

- The reporting of a fault (examples – broken equipment)
- An initial request for service (example – request for a course not already provided)
- A first request for information on services or an explanation of the schools services or policies or a decision
- Representations about the merits of the school’s policy decisions (example – the level at which the Course fees are set)
- A disagreement with the school’s policies
- A disagreement with, or refusal to accept a regulation which the school is applying.
- A comment (examples – compliments or suggestions as to how services could be improved; views, perhaps adverse, about the school’s stated policy or provision)
- Complaints about things that are not the responsibility of the School

The above lists are intended as guidelines only, they are not exhaustive. Language Café would like to make it clear that any feedback on services or performance are welcome. We regard such comments as opportunities to improve.

### **2. Dealing with Complaints – Initial concerns**

2.1. Language Cafe is committed to working in partnership with students, parents and the local community, in fact everyone that comes in contact with our School. We therefore believe it is important to respond to all concerns. As a result we hope to reduce the

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number of concerns that develop into formal complaints.

2.2. The underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the teacher or the individual delivering the service in the case of extended school provision(i.e. Homestay), will receive the first approach. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

### 3. Dealing with Complaints – Formal procedures

3.1.The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

3.2. Within Language Café the administrator has responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure. This does not preclude the Principal, but allows for specific focus in what we consider to be a critical area of the Schools performance.

### 4. Framework of Principles

Through our Complaints Procedure we aim to:

- ☒ encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- ☒ be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- ☒ be **simple** to understand and use;
- ☒ deal with any complaints quickly, fairly and confidentially.
- . learn from any issues that are raised.

### 5. Investigating Complaints

Where complaints are made, they will be investigated to ensure that we:

- ☒ establish **what** has happened, **who** has been involved; and to clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- ☒ speak to all parties involved;
- ☒ understand what would put things right;
- keep notes of the interview.

### 6. Resolving Complaints

6.1 At each stage in the procedure we will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- ☒ an apology or explanation;
- ☒ an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;

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- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur and an explanation of the steps taken to ensure this;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

If this procedure is properly followed we should be able to limit the number of complaints that become ongoing. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Principal is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

## **7. Time-Limits**

**We will aim to resolve complaints within 20 school/working days. If this is not possible we will tell you.**

## **8. Compliments**

Language Café endeavour to create a positive environment for learning and their policies support this. We aim to encourage and support the students and provide positive developmental feedback. In keeping with our approach, we are always pleased to hear from you when you feel we have done a good job. If you are delighted with the attention, service and education you are receiving/have received at Language Café please do not hesitate to pass on your compliments to the member/s of staff concerned.

Compliments should be recorded in our comments book, which is reviewed periodically to establish and build on the things that we do well.

## **Part 2: The Formal Complaints Procedure**

### **1. Stages of Complaints**

#### **Stage One: Complaint Heard by Staff Member**

Where a formal complaint is received by a member of staff they will;

- Acknowledge the complaint within 5 school working days, enclosing a copy of the School Complaints Procedure.
- Investigate the complaint and arrange a meeting with the complainant within 15 school working days.
- Try to reach a positive outcome, but where this is not possible indicate to the complainant that they have the right to take the complaint to the next stage by writing to the Principal within 10 school working days of the meeting.

The school respects the views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, if an alternative staff member is not available we will involve an independent party.

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Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, we will consider referring the complainant to another staff member. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial

Where the first approach is made the Principal, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the Administrator and advise them about the procedure

### **Stage Two: Complaint Heard by Principal**

At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at stage one as well as pursuing their initial complaint. The Principal may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken

On receipt of the complaint the Principal will;

- Acknowledge the complaint within 5 school working days, enclosing a copy of the School Complaints Procedure.
- Investigate the complaint and arrange a meeting with the complainant within 15 school working days.
- Try to reach a positive outcome, but where this is not possible indicate to the complainant that they have the right to take the complaint to appeal.

### **Stage Three: Complaint Heard by Complaints Appeal Panel**

The Appeal Panel will;

- Acknowledge the complaint within 5 school working days, enclosing a copy of the School Complaints Procedure.
- Investigate the complaint and arrange a meeting of the Appeal Panel within 20 school working days.
- Write to inform the complainant of the outcome of the meeting within 5 school working days.

The appeal panel hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process, and is not convened to merely rubber-stamp previous decisions.

The panel will be drawn professional individuals who have regular contact with the school (i.e. local councilor, community leaders) and will consist of three people. The panel will choose their own chair, clerk and compliance officer.

## **2. The Remit of The Complaints Appeal Panel**

The panel can:

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- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **The Role of the Clerk**

The clerk will be the contact point for the complainant .

### **The Role of the Compliance Officer**

The Compliance Officer will ensure that the correct procedures are followed.

### **The Role of the Chair of the Panel**

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that proceedings are fair and effective.

## **Part 3 – Managing and Recording Complaints**

### **1. Recording Complaints**

When a complaint is made the member of staff will make a record of the complaint on a complaint form and pass this to the Administrator. (see form attached)

The Administrator is responsible for the records and holds them centrally.

### **2. Operational Review**

The level and nature of complaints and the outcomes will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary.

### **3. Publicising the Procedure**

There is a legal requirement for the Complaints Procedures to be publicised. We will do this by making reference to the procedures in;



- the school handbooks;
- the information given to new students when they join the school;
- school bulletins or newsletters;

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-  documents supplied to community users including course information.
-  the school website.

Note;

There is currently no further course of redress once the appeals Panel has delivered their decision. Their decision is final.

#### **4. Complaints form**

**see next page**



COMPLAINT FORM

**Please complete and return to .....(complaints co-ordinator)  
who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.**

**Name of person making the complaint:**

**Student's name:**

**Relationship to the Student:**

**Relationship with Language Café**

**Address:**

**Postcode:**

**Day-time telephone number:**

**Evening telephone number:**

**Details of the complaint.**

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.  
(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?**



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**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**

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