



ISH

INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL OF
HELSINKI

ISH GENERAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Scope of the Complaints Procedure.....	3
Distinction Between Complaints and Grievances.....	3
3. Complaint Resolution Processes for Parents.....	3
Stage 1 – Written Complaint to Relevant Staff Member:.....	3
Stage 2 – Escalation to Division or Programme Directors:.....	3
Stage 3 – Escalation to Head of School:.....	4
Stage 4 – Appeal to the ISH Board:.....	4
Stage 5 – Optional Appeal to the Regional State Administrative Agency (AVI):.....	4
4. Legal Compliance and External Escalation.....	4
5. Confidentiality and Record-Keeping.....	5
6. Whistleblowing.....	5
7. Monitoring and Review.....	5

1. Introduction

At ISH, we are committed to fostering a positive and respectful learning environment for all members of our community. This General Complaints Procedure ensures that concerns are addressed fairly, promptly, and in a structured manner, in compliance with Finnish education and administrative law.

2. Scope of the Complaints Procedure

This procedure applies to general complaints by the ISH community (parents) related to school operations, policies, staff, and student matters that are not already addressed under specific policies (e.g., Academic Integrity, Inclusion, [IB Programme Delivery](#), or Safeguarding).

All complaints must be submitted in writing to ensure transparency and proper documentation.

Distinction Between Complaints and Grievances

- A **complaint** is a formal expression of dissatisfaction about an issue or decision made by the school that affects a student, staff member, or parent. It typically relates to school operations, teaching, behaviour, or policy application.
- A **grievance** refers specifically to a concern raised by an employee relating to their terms of employment, working conditions, or treatment in the workplace. Grievances are addressed through the ISH Staff Grievance Procedure.

3. Complaint Resolution Processes for Parents.

3.1 Educational or administrative matters

ISH follows a structured, legally compliant approach to handling complaints.

Stage 1 – Written Complaint to Relevant Staff Member:

- Complaints should be directed in writing to the relevant individual listed in the ISH [Communication Map](#) (e.g., homeroom teacher, subject teacher, advisor, or relevant staff member).
- Acknowledgement of receipt will be provided within three working days.
- A response will be given within ten working days.

Stage 2 – Escalation to Division or Programme Directors:

- If the issue remains unresolved, a formal written complaint should be escalated to the relevant Division Directors:
 - Director of PYP Early Learning (Early Years - G1)
 - Director of PYP Division (G2-G5)
 - Director of MYP Division (G6-10)
 - Director of DP (G11-12)

- The Division Director will review the complaint and respond within ten working days.

Stage 3 – Escalation to Head of School:

If the matter remains unresolved at the division level, a formal written complaint may be submitted to the Head of School.

- An acknowledgement of receipt will be provided within three working days.
- A formal resolution will be provided within fifteen working days.

Where a resolution has already been reached at Stage 2, complaints escalated to the Head of School must include **new evidence or a clear rationale** for reconsideration. The Head of School will carefully review the outcome and process from the previous stage and will only reopen the case if sufficient grounds are presented.

In all cases, the Head of School will act with impartiality and in the best interests of the entire school community, ensuring that due process, prior professional input, and the principles of fairness and transparency are upheld.

Stage 4 – Appeal to the ISH Board:

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the resolution provided by the Head of School, they may submit a formal appeal to the ISH Board.

- The appeal must be submitted in writing and include either new evidence or a clear procedural concern that warrants further review. Appeals that merely restate the original complaint without new grounds will not be reopened.
- The Board will conduct an independent and impartial review of the process and outcome to ensure fairness, adherence to policy, and appropriate resolution.
- A written decision will be provided within twenty working days.

The ISH Board serves the best interests of the whole school community and will consider the matter within that broader context.

Stage 5 – Optional Appeal to the [Regional State Administrative Agency \(AVI\)](#):

- Under Finnish law, the Regional State Administrative Agency (AVI) is the appeal and complaint authority for specific school-related issues.
- Parents and guardians may escalate complaints to AVI for cases explicitly covered by the legislation.
- This step may be considered when other resolution mechanisms within the school have been exhausted and the matter falls under AVI's jurisdiction.

4. Legal Compliance and External Escalation

- In compliance with Finnish law, parents have the right to escalate complaints beyond the school level when a satisfactory resolution has not been reached.

- Parents may appeal to the Regional State Administrative Agency for Education (AVI) (see Stage 5) if the complaint remains unresolved after all ISH channels have been exhausted.
- The school will ensure compliance with the Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003) and other relevant Finnish laws, maintaining fairness, confidentiality, and due process.

5. Confidentiality and Record-Keeping

- All complaints will be handled with confidentiality, respecting the rights of all parties involved.
- Personal data included in complaint records will be processed based on legitimate interest. A written account of complaints and resolutions will be securely maintained for future reference. Records will be retained for a maximum of 10 years from the resolution date, unless a longer retention period is legally mandated.

6. Whistleblowing

ISH is committed to promoting a culture of openness, accountability, and integrity. Whistleblowing (find relevant link [here](#)) is distinct from complaints and grievances. It refers to the reporting of serious concerns that are in the public interest and may indicate wrongdoing within the school. Examples include:

- Financial mismanagement or fraud
- Abuse or endangerment of students or staff
- Criminal activity or legal breaches
- Serious health and safety risks
- Systematic failure to follow legal or policy requirements

Whistleblower Protection

Individuals who raise a concern in good faith will not suffer any form of retribution or disadvantage as a result. Retaliation against whistleblowers is a serious matter and will be dealt with in accordance with Finnish labour law and ISH disciplinary procedures.

Raising a Whistleblowing Concern

Concerns may be reported in writing to the [Head of School](#) or, if the concern involves the Head of School, to the [Chair of the ISH Board](#). Reports must be handled confidentially, and the identity of the whistleblower will be protected wherever legally and operationally possible.

This procedure is aligned with the Finnish **Act on the Protection of Persons Reporting Infringements of European Union and National Law (1171/2022)**, also known as the Finnish Whistleblower Act.

7. Monitoring and Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with Finnish education law and ISH policies.