

# **Guidelines for Handling School Complaints**



## **La Salle Primary School**

## 1. Scope of Application

- 1.1 La Salle Primary School (i.e. the “School” or “LSPS”) values good communication with our stakeholders. Parents, students and staff are encouraged to make good use of the different channels available to express their views, so as to build up mutual trust and confidence and avoid any unnecessary misunderstanding. The guidelines are applicable to help handle complaints more effectively through various means, including post, fax, email, phone or in person.

### **Complaints Relating to Daily Operation and Internal Affairs of LSPS**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Management and Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School accounts (e.g. account records)</li><li>• Other charges (e.g. extra-curricular activities charges, registration fees)</li><li>• School policies (e.g. system of reward and penalty, arrangements regarding students’ suspension from school)</li><li>• Standards of service providers’ and contractors’ services (e.g. school bus services, supply of meal boxes)</li><li>• Service contracts (e.g. tendering procedures)</li><li>• School environment and hygiene (e.g. noise pollution, mosquito problems)</li></ul>
Learning and Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School-based curriculum (e.g. subject lesson time)</li><li>• Selection of subjects and class allocation</li><li>• Homework (e.g. amount of homework)</li><li>• Student assessment (e.g. assessment criteria, school-based assessment criteria)</li><li>• Staff performance (e.g. behaviour/ attitudes of teaching staff, job performance)</li></ul>
School Ethos and Student Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School ethos (e.g. uniform and other aspects of appearance)</li><li>• Home-school cooperation (e.g. consultation mechanism, communication channels)</li><li>• Student support (e.g. support for students with special educational needs)</li><li>• Extra-curricular activities (e.g. arrangements for interest groups and other student activities)</li></ul>
Student Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students’ overall performance (e.g. academic results, conduct)</li><li>• Student discipline (e.g. foul and abusive language, fighting, bullying, dishonesty such as cheating)</li></ul>

\*LSPS will handle complaints about daily operations and internal affairs in accordance with the Education Ordinance, Education Regulations, Codes of Aid, relevant circulars, guidelines and codes of practice to ensure compliance with the respective requirements.

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

Types	Examples
Complaints about the Education Ordinance, education policies and services directly provided by the EDB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education policies (e.g. class structure and class size);</li> <li>• Alleged contravention of the Education Ordinance, (e.g. in relation to corporal punishment, unregistered teacher) or contravention of the Codes of Aid (e.g. exorbitant charges, expulsion of students); and</li> <li>• Service directly provided by the EDB (e.g. school place allocation, services provided by the Regional Education Offices)</li> </ul>
Complaints to which the guidelines are not applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints related to ongoing legal proceedings;</li> <li>• Complaints under the jurisdiction of other organisations/ government departments;</li> <li>• Complaints governed by other ordinances or statutory regulations such as complaints against corruption, fraud or theft</li> </ul>
Complaints that LSPS will not handle in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anonymous complaints</li> <li>• Complaints not lodged by the person concerned</li> <li>• Complaints involving incidents that happened more than one year ago</li> <li>• Complaints with insufficient information</li> </ul>

1.3 In handling complaints lodged by parents, students, staff or the public, the School will refer to the following guiding principles:

#### 1.3.1 Principal I: Handling of Complaints by the Appropriate Party/Parties

- 1.3.1.1 The School will handle complaints relating to its daily operations and internal affairs. The EDB will handle complaints concerning the Education Ordinance, education policies and services. Complaints related to suspected breaches of other legislations of Hong Kong should be lodged to relevant law enforcement agencies.
- 1.3.1.2 Complaints that involve both the School and the EDB will be handled by both parties collaboratively.

#### 1.3.2 Principal II: Timely and Efficient Handling

- 1.3.2.1 The School will handle and respond to all verbal and written complaints as soon as possible to prevent any uninviting situation from worsening. Upon receipt of a complaint, the frontline staff (*refer to Section 3*) will immediately refer it to the School for action.
- 1.3.2.2 If an incident is refereed or reported to the School by the media, the School's Crisis Management Team will review it as a media enquiry and take any actions deemed appropriate.

### 1.3.3 Principal III: Clear and Transparent Mechanism

- 1.3.3.1 Details of the School's complaint policy will be communicated through different channels, e.g. school website and staff meetings to ensure stakeholders are aware.
- 1.3.3.2 The School will ensure the designated staff member(s) responsible for handling complaints understand and comply with the relevant guidelines.

### 1.3.4 Principal IV: Fair and Impartial Handling

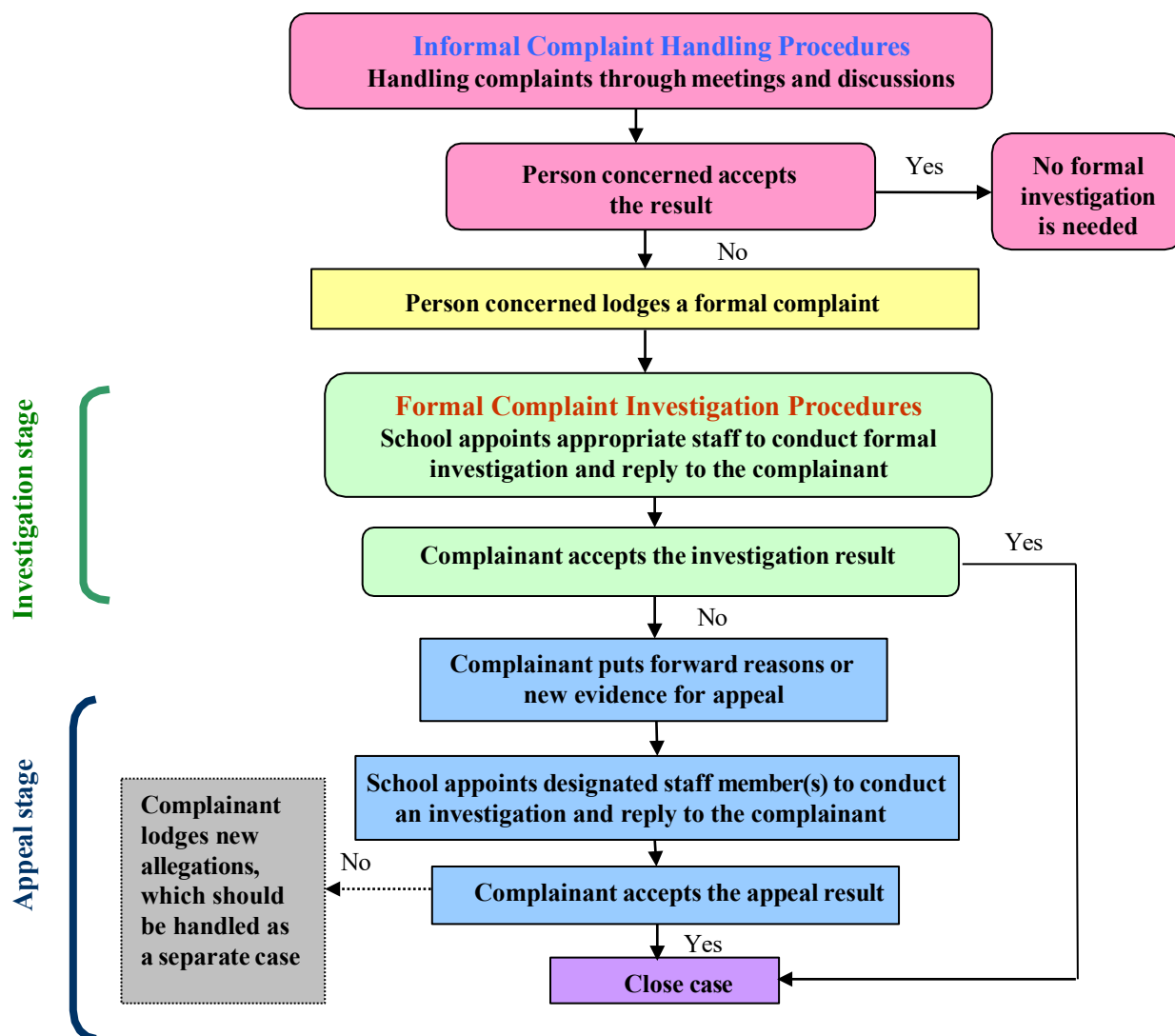
- 1.3.4.1 The School will handle complaints positively and treat the complainants and the subjects of the complaints fairly.
- 1.3.4.2 Before an investigation begins or where appropriate, the designated staff member(s) for handling the complaint and related individuals should declare interests.
- 1.3.4.3 To avoid conflict of interest, any staff member who is the subject of the complaint will not be involved in handling the case, supervising the investigation, or signing and issuing letters to the complainant.
- 1.3.4.4 The School will see to it that the rights of the complainants or other persons involved in the complaint are being protected and that their future communication and contact with the School would not be affected.

## 2. Procedures for Handling Complaints

### 2.1 Interpretation of Complaints

2.1.1 A complaint is an expression of disappointment, dissatisfaction or grievance expressed by the complainants, who may demand the School to rectify alleged mistakes, take disciplinary actions against the suspected offenders, or resolve the issue(s) raised.

2.1.2 Flowchart of School Complaint Handling Procedures:



## 2.2 Informal Complaint Handling Procedures

### 2.2.1 Immediate/Prompt Handling

The School aims to handle all complaints efficiently and appropriately.

- (i) If the School receives an informal complaint from the public, whether verbal or written, the frontline staff will clearly distinguish its nature and take appropriate action.
- (ii) The frontline staff will respond to the complainant politely, record necessary information and report to the School immediately.
- (iii) If necessary, the designated staff member(s) for handling the complaint will have direct talks or interviews with the complainant to explain the School's stance and remove any misunderstanding, misgivings or worries.
- (iv) The School will provide an initial response within 3 school days.

### 2.2.2 Replying to Complaints

For complaints handled by the informal complaint handling procedures, oral replies will suffice.

### 2.2.3 Complaint Records

If a complaint has been answered or resolved instantly, the designated staff member(s) will fill in the "Record of Informal Complaint" (*Appendix IV*) with any other supporting documents for record keeping.

## 2.3 Formal Complaint Handling Procedures

### 2.3.1 Arrangements for the Investigation and the Appeal Stages

If the complainant does not accept the School's response or the problem remains unresolved after the informal complaint procedures are followed, he/she may lodge a formal complaint in writing. Upon receipt of the formal complaint, the following investigation procedures (including an appeal mechanism) will be initiated:

#### (i) Investigation Stage

- Appropriate staff member(s) will be designated in accordance with *Section 3* to investigate the complaint and serve as the point of contact with the complainant;
- After declaration of interest, the designated staff member(s) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 school days. He/She will seek the complainant's consent to obtain his/he personal data and information relating to the complaint, and inform him/her of the name, post title and phone number of the staff responsible for handling the case for contact purposes.  
(*Samples of Acknowledgement Letters: Appendix I, II & III*)
- Immediate measures will be taken to preserve all records related to the complaint case, including text files, images, and/or audio recordings (if any), as evidence. The School will comply with the provisions of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance when collecting, holding, processing, or using personal data;
- The designated staff member(s) will complete the investigation within 60 school days from the date of receipt of the complaint and send a written reply to inform the complainant of the investigation result;

- If the complainant accepts the investigation result, the case will be concluded officially.
- If the complainant does not accept the investigation result and is able to provide new evidence or sufficient justification, he/she may lodge an appeal in writing against the School's decision within 7 days from the date of its reply.

(ii) Appeal Stage

- After declaration of interest, the designated staff member(s) will acknowledgeable receipt of the appeal within 3 school days;
- The school will designate an appropriate staff member in accordance with *Section 3* to handle the appeal and reply to the complainant;
- The designated staff member(s) will handle and resolve the appeal within 60 school days from the date of receipt of the appeal and send a written reply to inform the complainant of the appeal result;
- If the complainant accepts the appeal result, the case will be concluded officially.
- If the complainant raises new allegations, the School will handle them separately as a new case in order to avoid mixing up the old complaints with the new ones.

The time limit for replying to a complaint/appeal will start from the date on which it is received or when the complainant agrees to let the School have access to his/her personal data. If the information submitted is incomplete, the time limit will start from the date on which the School receives from the complainant the necessary information. If a reply cannot be given within the specified period, interim replies may be issued to the complainant explaining why a longer handling time is needed to provide a substantive reply and, if possible, the estimated time frame for using a substantive reply.

2.3.2 Complaint/Appeal Records

The School will keep a clear record of cases handled by the formal complaint investigation procedures including correspondences, "Record of Formal Complaint" (*Appendix V*)/ "Record of Appeal" (*Appendix VI*) and interview records.

### 3. Arrangements for Handling Complaints

#### 3.1 Designated Staff

3.1.1 The School, having taken into account the nature of the complaint, its scope and the people involved, will designate staff member(s) to handle the complaint with reference to the following arrangements:

- (i) Frontline staff responsible for receiving complaints should be School Office staff. He/She does not handle complaints, but should respond to the complainant politely, record necessary information and report promptly to the School to ensure efficient and appropriate escalation.
- (ii) The Supervisor and the Principal are the delegated authority to decide on staff responsible for the investigation according to the nature of the case.
- (iii) Designated staff should be proactive in communicating with the complainants, and prompt in providing responses as well as the information they need. The School will also ensure that frontline/designated staff member(s) have proper authorisation and clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.
- (iv) Staff dealing with any appeal will be of a higher rank than those responsible for the investigation. If this is not applicable, the School will make appropriate arrangements to ensure fair and impartial handling.
- (v) Deployment of staff for handling complaints at different stages:

Parties involved	Designated staff member(s)	
	Investigation Stage	Appeal Stage
Teacher/ Non-teaching staff	Panels/ Team Heads/ Senior Teachers and/or Relevant Staff Member(s)	Vice Principal
Senior Teacher	Vice Principal and Designated Staff Member(s)	Principal
Vice Principal	Principal and Designated Staff Member(s)	Supervisor
Principal	Supervisor/ IMC Investigation Task Force#	IMC Appeal Task Force#
Supervisor/ IMC	SSB Investigation Task Force*	SSB Appeal Task Force*

*#The Supervisor is the delegated authority to decide which Managers will be the members of the IMC Task Force.*

*\*The Chairperson of the SSB is the delegated authority to decide which SSB members will be the members of the SSB Task Force.*

#### 3.2 Support and Training

3.2.1 The School will support staff in effectively handling complaints by encouraging them to attend training programmes organised by the EDB and/or arrange experience sharing sessions for frontline/designated staff to enhance their capability in handling complaints and resolving conflicts.



### 3.3 Confidentiality

- 3.3.1 All contents and information of complaints will be kept strictly confidential and restricted to internal reference or reference by relevant persons only.
- 3.3.2 The regulations and recommendations laid down in the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance must be strictly followed when collecting personal data during the handling process or when dealing with requests for the disclosure of data/records in respect of the complaint case.
- 3.3.3 To avoid misunderstanding during interviews or meetings with the complainant,
- it must be stated clearly whether the person(s) concerned can be accompanied by others if there is such a request;
  - consent of all attendees must be obtained if the session is to be audio/video recorded;
  - all parties must observe and comply with the Data Protection Principles stated in Schedule 1 of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486) and be cautious of any unauthorized disclosure of personal data or other information of a third party.

## 4. Handling of Unreasonable Behaviour

- 4.1 Certain unreasonable behaviour of complainants may have a severe negative impact (e.g. draining a considerable amount of the School's human resources, interrupting their operations or services, as well as threatening the safety of staff and other stakeholders). The following policies and measures may be adopted in handling this kind of unreasonable behaviour to ensure school operations would not be affected.

Unreasonable Behaviour	Policies and Measures
(i) <u>Unreasonable attitude or behaviour</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Acts of violence or intimidation</li><li>Making complaints with abusive language/conduct or in an insulting and discriminatory tone whether performed face-to-face, by phone, or in writing</li><li>Providing false data or deliberately concealing facts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Designated staff member(s) handling the complaint should convey clearly to the complainant and demand the complainant stops acting in such a way.</li><li>If the complainant refuses to comply after the warning, the staff may terminate the meeting or conversation with the complainant.</li><li>The staff should make a decision, depending on the situation, on whether to terminate the interview or dialogue with the complainant to leave if his/her behaviour poses an immediate threat to personal safety or damages their personal interests.</li><li>The School may report to the police or take legal action, if necessary.</li></ul>
(ii) <u>Unreasonable demands</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Requesting a huge amount of information or demanding special treatment</li><li>Making telephone calls incessantly to ask for a dialogue or an interview, or to command a certain staff member to meet at a specific time and place</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>If a complainant makes unreasonable demands which have an adverse impact on the School, e.g. interrupting its operation/services or other stakeholders are affected by the unreasonable behaviour of the complainant, the School may suggest to the complainant alternative communication methods (e.g.</li></ul>

	<p>make appointment before visiting the School, submit his/her views in writing or contact the designated staff member(s) according to the School's arrangement, etc.). The School will notify the complainant in writing of such arrangements and handling procedures.</p>
<p>(iii) <u>Unreasonable persistent complaints</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insisting on rejecting the explanations and finds of the School, and/or requiring the School to discipline certain person(s), even after appropriate investigation procedures have been taken</li> <li>• In respect of the same case, repeatedly making the same complaints or presenting similar justifications as before without providing any new evidence</li> <li>• In respect of the same case, persistently bringing in new allegations or new complaint targets, but failing to present concrete evidence</li> <li>• Interpreting things in an unreasonable or irrational manner, or over trivial details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the School has carefully examined the case and handled it properly under the prescribed investigation and appeal procedures, it may decide whether to restrict or stop contact with the complainant, and cease handling the case.</li> <li>• To avoid any unrealistic expectations on the part of the complainant, the School will communicate to the complainant in a firm manner that a final decision is irreversible.</li> <li>• The School may send a "final letter" to the complainant, referring him/her to the replies previously given, and reiterate that the School will neither respond to the same complaint nor contact him/her again.</li> </ul>

**Sample 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 received your written complaint on DD MM YYYY. The case is being investigated and a reply will be sent to you within 60 school days.

If you have any enquiries, please contact Mr/Ms\* X at 2336 2609.

(Signature)

Name and post of the designated staff member

\*Please delete where inappropriate

**Sample Acknowledgement Letter (2)**

[For cases where referral of a complaint to a third party (e.g. 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 received your written complaint on DD MM YYYY. To facilitate our investigation and follow-up, please fill in the reply form attached and send it to us before DD MM YYYY. We will notify you of the outcome when the investigation is completed.

If you have any enquiries, please contact Mr/Ms\* X at 2336 2609.

(Signature)

Name and post of the designated staff member

\*Please delete where inappropriate

## Sample Acknowledgement Letter (2)

### Reply Form

To: La Salle Primary School

File No.: (if applicable)

Name of the complainant: Mr/Ms\* \_\_\_\_\_

[Please write the name as appears 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 handing this complaint, I consent / object\* to:

1. the school's reproduction of this complaint and any materials submitted and the transfer of copies of such materials to relevant persons/ organisations for processing my complaint.
2. the school's obtaining my personal data and other information kept by relevant persons/ organisations that are considered relevant and necessary for the purpose of processing my complaint.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the complainant

\*Please delete where inappropriate

**Sample Reply Letter for Persistent Complaints**

DD MM YYYY

Name of the complainant

Address of the complainant

Dear Mr/Ms\* XX:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated DD MM YYYY. For our stance on the relevant issue, please refer to our reply/replies dated DD MM YYYY (and dates of other replies [if applicable]). Please note that we will neither respond to the same complaint nor contact you again.

(Signature)

Name and post of the designated staff member

\*Please delete where inappropriate

**La Salle Primary School**  
**Record of Informal Complaint**

Date of complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

Mode: ☐ Call the School Office ☐ Call the Principal / Vice Principal / Teacher\*

(Name: \_\_\_\_\_)

☐ In person ☐ By letter ☐ By email ☐ By fax ☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Complainant: Mr / Ms\* \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Parent of \_\_\_\_\_ (Class: \_\_\_\_\_)☐ Student (Class: \_\_\_\_\_)☐ Public: \_\_\_\_\_☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject(s) of complaint:

☐ Principal ☐ Vice Principal ☐ Teacher ☐ Non-teaching Staff☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of complaint:

☐ Management and Organisation ☐ Learning and Teaching ☐ Student Ethos and Student Support☐ Teacher Professional Conduct ☐ Student Performance ☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of complaint:

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Information/ Document attached: ☐ No ☐ Yes (Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)Action taken: ☐ Contacted by phone (Date: \_\_\_\_\_)☐ Interview (Date: \_\_\_\_\_)☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date: \_\_\_\_\_)Result: ☐ Complainant accepted the reply. No further action is required.☐ Complainant did not accept the reply. A formal complaint will be lodged.☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Report completed by:

Name	Rank	Signature	There is no conflict of interest.
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Please delete as appropriate.**\*To be submitted to the Principal within 5 school days after settling the case.*

**La Salle Primary School**  
**Record of Formal Complaint**

Date of complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

Mode: ☐ Call the School Office ☐ Call the Principal / Vice Principal / Teacher\*

(Name: \_\_\_\_\_)

☐ In person ☐ By letter ☐ By email ☐ By fax ☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Complainant: Mr / Ms\* \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Parent of \_\_\_\_\_ (Class: \_\_\_\_\_)

☐ Student (Class: \_\_\_\_\_)

☐ Public: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject(s) of complaint:

☐ Principal ☐ Vice Principal ☐ Teacher ☐ Non-teaching Staff

☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of complaint:

☐ Management and Organisation ☐ Learning and Teaching ☐ Student Ethos and Student Support

☐ Teacher Professional Conduct ☐ Student Performance ☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of complaint:

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Information/ Document attached: ☐ No ☐ Yes (Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

Action taken: ☐ Contacted by phone ☐ Interview ☐ Written reply

☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Result: ☐ Complainant accepted the reply. No further action is required.

☐ Complainant did not accept the reply. An appeal will be lodged.

☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Report completed by:

Name	Rank	Signature	There is no conflict of interest.
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Please delete as appropriate.*

*\*To be submitted to the Principal within 5 school days after settling the case.*



**La Salle Primary School**  
**Investigation Report for Formal Complaint**

**1. Summary of complaint:**

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**2. Allegation:** *[Arrange by number if more than one]*

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**3. Investigation**

Date of follow-up actions

Issue of Notice of Acknowledgement : \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone contact : \_\_\_\_\_  
Interview with the complainant : \_\_\_\_\_  
Issue of written reply : \_\_\_\_\_

Sequence of events:

Date	Events	Attachment (interview record/ meeting notes/ report, etc.)
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

**4. Summary of investigation:**

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## 5. Analysis and conclusion:

Allegation (Make reference to Item 2)	Substantiated	Not Substantiated	Partially Substantiated	Not Applicable

## 6. Follow-up actions or recommendations

*[If applicable, e.g. disciplinary actions taken against the subject of complaint, improvement measures adopted by the school on the incident, etc.]*

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## 7. Other related information

*[Such as written statement/ declaration, circular, guidelines, ordinance, etc.]*

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Report completed by:

Name	Rank	Signature	There is no conflict of interest.
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Please delete as appropriate.*

*\*To be submitted to the Principal within 5 school days after settling the case.*

**La Salle Primary School  
Record of Appeal**

Date of appeal: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Summary of appeal** *[with new evidence/ justification]:*

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**2. Allegation:** *[Arrange by number if more than one]*

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**Appeal substantiated** ☐

**Appeal not substantiated** ☐

(Reason(s): \_\_\_\_\_)

**3. Investigation**

Date of follow-up actions

Issue of Notice of Acknowledgement : \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone contact : \_\_\_\_\_

Interview with the complainant : \_\_\_\_\_

Issue of written reply : \_\_\_\_\_

Sequence of events:

Date	Events	Attachment (interview record/ meeting notes/ report, etc.)
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

#### 4. Summary of investigation:

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#### 5. Analysis and conclusion:

Allegation (Make reference to Item 2)	Substantiated	Not Substantiated	Partially Substantiated	Not Applicable

#### 6. Follow-up actions or recommendations

*[If applicable, e.g. disciplinary actions taken against the subject of complaint, improvement measures adopted by the school on the incident, etc.]*

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#### 7. Other related information

*[Such as written statement/ declaration, circular, guidelines, ordinance, etc.]*

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Report completed by:

Name	Rank	Signature	There is no conflict of interest.
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Please delete as appropriate.*

*\*To be submitted to the Principal within 5 school days after settling the case.*