



**AMITY**  
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL  

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ABU DHABI

# **Complaints Policy**

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 **Circulation:** this policy is addressed to the Senior Management Team; to all members of the teaching and pastoral staff, including school medical staff and nursing staff; and, on request, to parents.
- 1.2 **Policy status:** the policy has been approved by the School Principal and submitted to the Board of Amity International School, Abu Dhabi. It provides guidelines for handling concerns and complaints. It takes account of schedule, paragraph 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 and in accordance with ADEC guidelines. The procedures set out below may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case. Certain procedures can only be carried out during term time.
- 1.3 **Application:** separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection issue or if the Principal excludes or asks a student to leave and the parents seek a Board Member's review of that decision.
- 1.4 **Parent/s / You** includes a current or prospective parent or legal guardian or education guardian, and may at our discretion include a parent whose child has recently left the School.
- 1.5 **Four stages:** this policy describes a four stage procedure:
- **Stage 1:** informal raising of a concern or difficulty notified orally or in writing to a member of staff; every effort will be made to resolve the concern at this stage
  - **Stage 2:** a formal complaint in writing to the relevant school leader
  - **Stage 3:** a renewed complaint in writing to the Principal or, in exceptional circumstances, the Chair of the Board of Amity
  - **Stage 4:** a reference to the Complaints Panel
- 1.6 **A concern about the safety of your child should be notified immediately to the person you believe is best placed to take urgent action and should be confirmed in writing to the Principal.**

## 2 Policy Aim and Statement

- 2.1 **Aim:** the aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and pupils' confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. We will try to resolve every concern or complaint in a positive way with the

aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances.

- 2.2 **Policy statement:** we need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. We recognise that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, which would be damaging to relationships and also to our school culture. Parents and pupils should never feel - or be made to feel - that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a student or his/her opportunities at this school. The policy however distinguishes between a concern or difficulty which can be resolved informally and a formal complaint which will require investigation.

### 3 Management of Complaints

- 3.1 **Complaints Co-ordinator:** the Principal has appointed a senior member of staff, the **Parent Relations Executive (PRE)** to be responsible for the co-ordination and administration of the Complaints Procedure. If the Complaints Co-ordinator is unavailable or is the subject of the complaint, her duties will be carried out by the Head of Foundation Stage or another senior member of staff. The main responsibilities of the Complaints Co-ordinator are to:

- be the first point of contact while the matter remains unresolved and keep records
- co-ordinate the complaints procedures in school
- maintain an on-going training programme for all school employees in relation to complaints
- monitor the keeping, confidentiality and storage of records in relation to complaints
- report regularly to the Principal with respect to complaints

- 3.2 **Senior Management Team with Pastoral Responsibility:** A senior member of staff is available at all times when the School is open. In the absence of the Principal, or by way of delegated authority, these staff all have authority to take decisions relating to most matters of pastoral care and discipline: PRE & Head of Foundation Stage.

- 3.3 **Complaints Form:** every formal concern or complaint notified to a member of staff will be noted, together with the action taken, on a standard form. A sample of the form is attached to this policy in Appendix 3.

#### **4 Stage 1: Concerns and Difficulties**

- 4.1 **Concerns:** we expect that most concerns, where a parent or pupil seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally. Examples might include dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care, or about allocation of privileges or responsibilities, or about a timetable clash or some other aspect of the School's systems or equipment, or a billing error.
- 4.2 **Notification:** please raise the concern initially as follows:
- 4.2.1 education issues - if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, please speak or write to the teacher, Key Stage leader, Head of Foundation Stage or Principal;
  - 4.2.2 pastoral care - for concerns relating to matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to the Teachers, PRE, Key Stage leader, Head of Foundation Stage or Principal;
  - 4.2.3 disciplinary matters - a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it, and, if not resolved, with the teacher, PRE, Key Stage leader, Head of Foundation Stage or Principal;
  - 4.2.4 financial matters - a query relating to fees or extras should be referred to the School Accountant;
- 4.3 **Acknowledgement:** we will acknowledge a written notification by telephone, fax, e-mail or letter within two working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the holidays. A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing, contact will be retained until the matter is resolved.
- 4.4 **Unresolved concerns:** a concern which has not been resolved by informal means within 15 working days should be notified in writing as a formal complaint which will be dealt with in accordance with Stage 2 below.

#### **5 Stage 2: Formal Complaint**

- 5.1 **Notification:** an unresolved concern under Stage 1, or a complaint which needs investigation, or dissatisfaction with some aspect of the School's policies, procedures, management or administration should be set out in writing with full details and sent with all relevant documents and your full contact details in an envelope addressed to the relevant Complaints Co-ordinator or Principal. Your complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within two working days during term time, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale.

A Complaints Form will be completed and sent to the Complaints Co-ordinator. The Complaints Co-ordinator will inform the Principal and keep her informed throughout proceedings.

- 5.2 **Investigation:** the Principal may ask a senior member of staff to act as "investigator". The investigator may request additional information from you and will probably wish to speak to you personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. The outcome of the investigation will be reported to the Principal who will then notify you in writing of her decision and the reasons for it. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to your complaint.

5.3 **Outcome**

The Principal's aim would be to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution to the complaint within one calendar month from the receipt of the complaint. Please note that any complaint received within one month of the end of term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of school holidays and the unavailability of personnel.

**6 Stage 3: Reference to the Principal or, in exceptional circumstances, The Chairman**

- 6.1 **Notification:** if you are dissatisfied with the Principal's decision under Stage 2, your complaint may be renewed in writing to the Principal, or in exceptional circumstances, to the Chairman of the Board. Your letter to the Principal or Chairman should give full details of your complaint and enclose all relevant documents and your full contact details. Your letter will normally be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within four working days during term time, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale.

- 6.2 **Action by the Principal or Chairman:** the Principal or Chairman will arrange for your complaint to be investigated following procedures equivalent to those described in Stage 2 (above). When the Principal or Chairman is satisfied that she has established all the material facts and relevant policies, so far as is practicable, she will notify you in writing of her decision and the reasons for it. If you are not satisfied with the Principal's decision you may ask for the complaint to be referred to the Chairman. If you are not satisfied with the Chairman's decision you may ask for the complaint to be referred to the Complaints Panel. They will aim to provide a response within two weeks of receiving your letter.

## **7 Stage 4: Reference to the Complaints Panel**

- 7.1 A Panel hearing is a review of the decisions taken by the Principal and Chairman. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.
- 7.2 **The role of the Panel:** the Panel's task is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering:
- the documents provided by both parties and
  - any representations made by you, the Principal or the Chairman
- 7.3 If, after establishing the facts, the Panel consider that the complaint is made out, they will uphold the complaint. If the Panel consider that the complaint is not made out, they will dismiss the complaint. They will make these decisions on the balance of probabilities.
- 7.4 It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils, or parents. The Panel may make recommendations on these or any other issues to the Principal or to the board as appropriate.
- 7.5 **Composition:** we have the ability to constitute a Complaints Panel if required. This would comprise of School Board Members.
- 7.6 **Notification:** to request a hearing before the Complaints Panel please write to the Chairman's PA within seven working days of the decision complained of. Your request will only be considered if you have completed the procedures at Stages 1-3. Please ensure that a copy of all relevant documents and your full contact details accompany your letter to the Chairman's PA. Please state in your letter the outcome that you desire and all the grounds of your complaint. Please also send the Chairman's PA a list of the documents which you believe to be in the School's possession and wish the Panel to see. The Chairman's PA will acknowledge your request in writing within four working days.
- 7.7 **Convening the Panel:** the Chairman's PA to the Board will convene the Complaints Panel as soon as reasonably practicable but the Panel will not normally sit during half terms or school holidays. The Panel will consist of a minimum of three individuals who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint. One member of the Panel shall be an independent member. You may ask the Chairman's PA to tell you who has been appointed to sit on the Panel.

- 7.8 **Notice of hearing:** as soon as reasonably practicable, the Chairman's PA will send you written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing together with brief details of the Panel members who will hear it. The hearing will normally follow the procedure set out in Schedule 1.
- 7.9 **Attendance:** you will be asked to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative, teacher, or friend. It is not necessary for that person to be legally qualified but if you do wish to be accompanied by a legally qualified person, acting in their professional capacity, please notify the School at least seven days before the hearing. Copies of additional documents you wish the Panel to consider should be sent to the Clerk at least three clear days prior to the hearing.
- 7.10 **Chairman:** the hearing will be chaired by one member of the Panel (chosen by themselves) and will be conducted in an informal manner.
- 7.11 **Hearing:** all statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. All present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes. The Chairman's PA will be asked to take a handwritten minute of the proceedings.
- 7.12 **Evidence:** the Chairman will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.
- 7.13 **Conduct:** all those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chairman. If terminated, the original decision will stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his/her comment will be minuted.
- 7.14 **Adjournment:** the Chairman may, at his/her discretion, adjourn the hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue. This may include an adjournment to take legal advice.
- 7.15 **Decision:** after due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel shall reach a decision unless there is an agreed position. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations may be notified orally at the hearing or subsequently and shall be confirmed in writing to you by electronic mail where appropriate within seven working days. If you do not wish to receive the decision by electronic mail, a copy will be given or posted to you. The decisions, findings and any recommendations will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Board and the Principal. Reasons for the Decision will be given.

The Decision may include recommendations and will be sent to you, the Chairman, the Principal and, where relevant, any person about whom the complaint has been made.

- 7.16 **Private proceeding:** a hearing before the Complaints Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.

**Confidentiality:** A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at Stage 1 or proceed to a panel hearing. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will be supplied to parents on request. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by Regulation 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003, or where disclosure is required in the course of a school's inspection or under other legal authority. In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will normally be destroyed following each school inspection. In exceptional circumstances some details will be retained for a further period as necessary.

**Circulation**

School Board, staff and parents on request

**Status**

Complies with schedule, paragraph 7 of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2003  
The Complaints Policy will also the ADEC guidelines.

## **Appendix 1            Procedures to be followed at a hearing of the Complaints Panel**

1        Introduction: this is the procedure that will normally be followed by the Complaints Panel and is designed to ensure that all parties have the opportunity to present their views to the Panel.

2        Meeting format: the meeting will take the form of a "round the table" hearing, where all parties and the Panel are present in the same room throughout. Present in the room throughout the hearing will be:

- the Panel Members
- the Chairman's PA. The Chairman's PA will take notes of the meeting. Any notes produced by the Chairman's PA will not be verbatim and will belong to the Chairman. The Chairman can authorise the release of the Chairman's PA's notes on condition that they remain confidential
- the parents who have made the complaint
- any person that the parents have brought as a supporter
- the Principal and/or the relevant member of Senior Leadership
- any other appropriate member of staff

**Note:** any witnesses called by any of the above parties may be asked to make their contribution and then leave rather than staying for the whole proceeding.

### **3            Suggested agenda**

3.1     Welcome and introductions by the Chairman.

3.2     Parents present their complaints. Where two parents are present, it is often more helpful if one parent undertakes the responsibility of presentation and answering of questions.

3.3     The Panel and Principal may ask questions of parents for clarification. Questions should be put through the Chairman of the Panel who can intervene if s/he thinks that questions are inappropriate or are straying into cross examination.

3.4     The Principal puts her case, explaining the reasons for the decision and consideration and calling witnesses if necessary.

- 3.5 The parents and Panel Members may ask questions of the Principal for clarification. Again such questions should be put through the Chairman who can intervene as necessary.
  - 3.6 The Principal is invited to make any further relevant points.
  - 3.7 The parents are then invited to make any further relevant points.
  - 3.8 When the Panel is satisfied that it has established facts sufficient for it to make its decision, the Chairman may bring the hearing to a close and inform the parties that they will be notified in writing of the decision, normally within seven working days.
  - 3.9 The parents and Principal leave together with any witnesses, supporters or representatives.
- 4 **Legal advice:** if, during the hearing, parents introduce legal points on which the Panel feel they will need advice, they will consider one of two options:
- 4.1 the Panel may decide to take a careful note of points made and to consider the advice of the School's lawyers before making their final decision; or
  - 4.2 if the Panel feel that an immediate response is required, they may adjourn the hearing to take telephone advice from the School's lawyers.

## Appendix 2

### Contacting ADEC (and/or Inspection team)

The School is inspected by ADEC [and/or Inspection team], an independent organisation which reports to the UK Government on schools. Parents have the right to contact an inspector if they have a complaint. ADEC [and/or ISI] will usually expect parents to have followed the School's formal complaints procedure before contacting them. However, you can report your concerns to ADEC on +971 615 0000 or you can write to the ADEC Private Schools and Quality Assurance Sector Office.

<b>ADEC</b>
Private Schools and Quality Assurance Sector PO Box 36005 Abu Dhabi UAE

### Appendix 3 Complaints form

This form is to be completed by any member of staff who receives a formal written complaint or who wishes to make a formal complaint. It should be passed to the Principal's PA in a sealed envelope.

<b>What is the nature of the complaint? (Please tick)</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff conduct	<input type="checkbox"/> Parental conduct
<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral care
<input type="checkbox"/> Condition of premises	<input type="checkbox"/> Time tabling
<input type="checkbox"/> Matters of regime and routine	<input type="checkbox"/> Access to or regulation of extracurricular activities
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please give details)	
<b>Please give details of your complaint</b>	
Date/s of incident	Time/s
<b>If you are complaining about someone's behaviour please give the names of any witnesses to the incident/s</b>	
<b>Action taken</b>	
Name	Position
Signed	Date

Amity International School, Abu Dhabi

#### **Appendix 4: The Number of Formal Complaints Received**

The number of formal complaints made in 2015/16:

The number of formal complaints made in 2016/17:

The number of formal complaints made in 2017/18: