

## 1. Policy Statement

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In accordance with the operational regulations, policies and guidance respective to private schools in Abu Dhabi, Amity International School (the School) operate a Complaints policy in order to be fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and pupils' confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. The School 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, review our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances.

The School recognises 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.

## 2. Aims

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The aims and purpose of this policy is to:

- To ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible.
- To outline the practice and procedures of the School Complaints Committee with respect to addressing all complaints made against the School and its operations, and dealing with them effectively and promptly.

## 3. Definitions

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For the purposes of this policy:

The School Complaints Committee refers to the School permanent sub-committee that is responsible for considering formal, written complaints filed against the School and its modus operandi whether from a Parent/Guardian, member of staff, student or any other stakeholder, hereinafter referred to as the

“Complainant”. Parent 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.

## 4. Practice and Procedure

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### 4.1 Complaints Coordinator

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The Principal has appointed a member of the administration staff as a role of Complaints Coordinator. This person is 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 Operations Manager or another senior member of staff. The main responsibilities of the Complaints Co-ordinator are to:

- Ensure that all complaints are recorded and managed professionally through the procedures mentioned in this policy and its corresponding Article 26 of the Organising Regulations, and in line with the School’s policies.
- Be the first point of contact while the matter remains unresolved. Co-ordinate the complaints procedures in school.
- Monitor the keeping, confidentiality and storage of records in relation to complaints. Report regularly to the Principal with respect to complaints.
- Inform Parents/Guardians, students, staff and other School stakeholders of the roles and responsibilities of the School Complaints Committee in the incident of a complaint.

### 4.2 School Complaints Committee

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The School has a permanent School Complaints Committee that considers all formal, written complaints made against the School and its operations, and attempts to resolve these in line with the School’s policies and the Education Council’s regulations, policies and requirements. The Principal chairs the School Complaints Committee, and may delegate this authority to others as he deems appropriate. If a complaint has been made against the Principal, then the Principal shall be excluded from the committee and replaced with a School Governor.

Schools are expected to resolve complaints internally and informally, if necessary, with the help of the Principal. In case the parties are dissatisfied with the proposed solution, the complainant should refer the complaint in writing to the School Complaints Committee.

#### School Complaints Committee Members:

Committee Chair: Sarah Wade – Executive Principal

Committee Members: Dr Bushra Foroodian – Vice Principal & Head of Secondary

Julie Engles – Head of Lower Primary

Michelle Nayler – Head of Upper Primary

Jo Vigneron – Governor

H.E. Dr. Saif Al Seiari – Governor

If the complainant is against any of the committee members, then that member shall be excluded from the committee. The Complaints Committee may not be able to form during formal school holidays due to staff absence. However, it will form as soon as reasonably practicable following the holidays.

#### 4.3 Time Scale

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The school aims to resolve all informal complaints within 3 working days. If the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed solution, a formal complaint will be filed in writing, for the consideration of the School Complaints Committee. All written complaints shall be acknowledged within 24 hours of receipt. The School Complaints Committee shall review and respond to all complaints in writing within 5 working days.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decisions of the School's Complaints Committee, he/she has the right of appeal to ADEK against it.

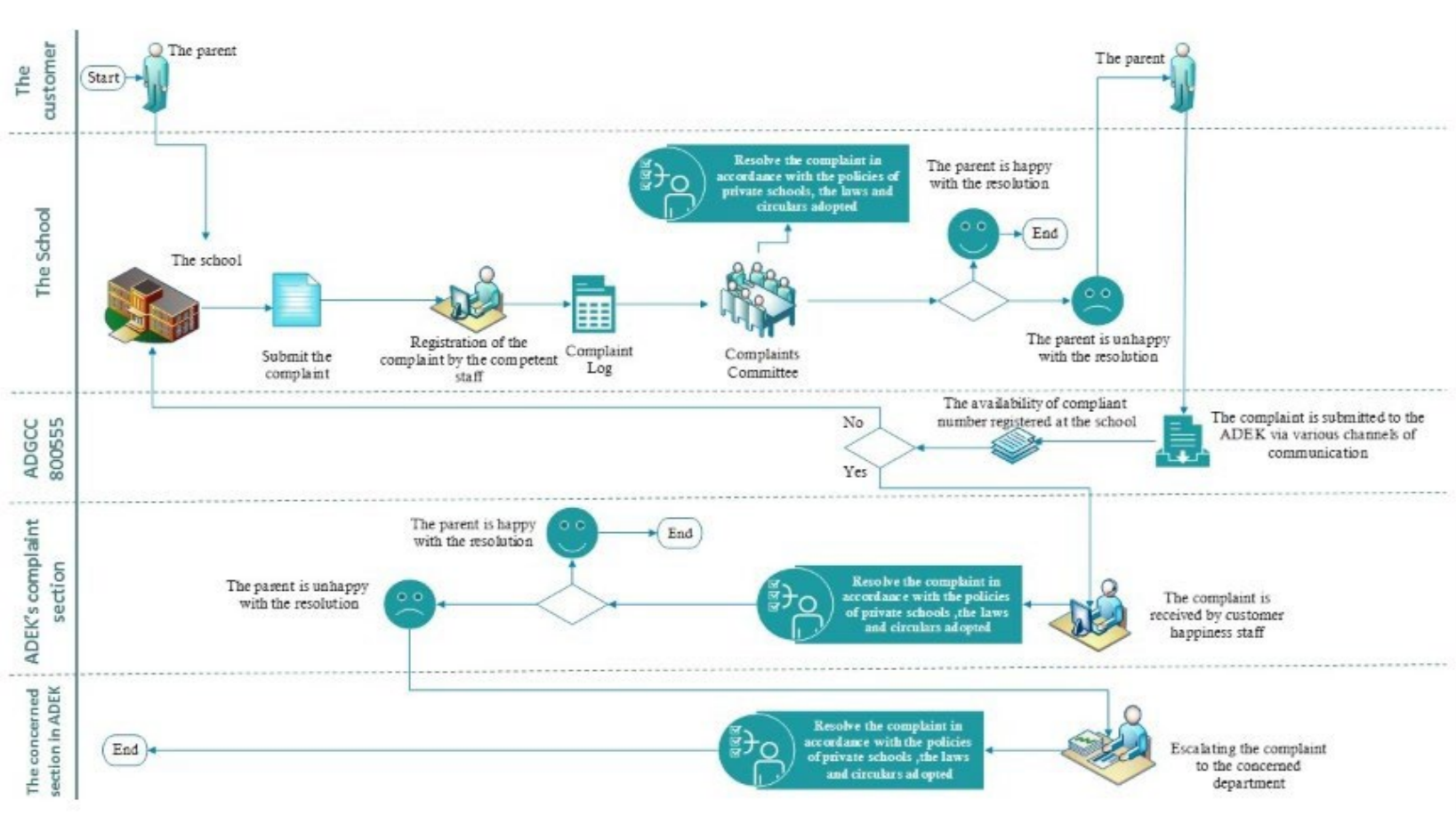
#### 4.4 Complaint Form

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A formal complaint is submitted in writing to the Complaints Coordinator. A Complaint Form (see Appendix) is supplied by ADEK for completion in the instance of a formal Complaint submitted to the school administration. The School's Government Relations Executive sends a list of registered complaints weekly to [ppcs@adek.abudhabi.ae](mailto:ppcs@adek.abudhabi.ae). A copy of the complaint should be submitted to the student's eSIS file. Every formal complaint notified to a member of staff will be noted, together with the action taken, on the form.

## 4.5 The Complaints Process

Should the School receive a complaint from a parent, a pupil, a member of staff or even a member of the community, the following steps will be taken:



#### 4.5.1 Stage 1: Concerns and Difficulties

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We expect that most concerns, where a parent, pupil, or staff seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally. Concerns can be raised to the Complaints Coordinator or as follows:

- Education issues – if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, please speak or write to the class teacher, tutor, Head of Year, Head of School or Principal as deemed appropriate.
- Pastoral care – for concerns relating to matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to the class teacher, tutor, Head of Year, Head of School or Principal as deemed appropriate.
- 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, class teacher, tutor, Head of Year, Head of School or Principal as deemed appropriate.
- Financial matters – a query relating to fees or extras should be referred to the School Accountant.
- Operational Matters – concerns over operational matters can be referred to the Complaints Coordinator.
- Staff Concerns – concerns regarding staff can be referred to the Complaints Coordinator.

All concerns raised by telephone or e-mail, will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within 24 hours 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. A concern which has not been resolved by informal means within 3 working days should be notified in writing as a formal complaint which will be dealt with in accordance with Stage 2 below.

#### 4.5.2 Stage 2: Formal Complaint

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An unresolved concern under Stage 1, or dissatisfaction with some aspect of the School's policies, procedures, management or administration, or a formal complaint which requires investigation, should be submitted in writing with full details and submitted with any relevant documents and full contact details of the complainant to the Complaints Co-ordinator. A Complaints Form will be completed and recorded by the Complaints Co-ordinator, who will inform the Principal and keep him informed throughout the proceedings. The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within 24 hours of receipt

during term time, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale. The complaint is logged on the complaints register and allocated a complaint number.

The Principal may ask a senior member of staff to act as "investigator". The investigator may request additional information from the complainant and will probably wish to speak to them personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. The outcome of the investigation will be reported to the Principal who will forward it to the Complaints Committee, who will then analyse the findings and notify the complainant in writing of its decision and the reasons for it. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

The Committee aims to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution within one week from the receipt of the complaint. Please note that any complaint received within one week of the end of term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to staff absence during the school holidays.

The Committee's task is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints by considering:

- The documents provided by any of the involved parties.
- The outcome of any investigation.
- Any representations made by the complainant, the investigator, or the Principal, (or ADEK should this have been the second time the matter is addressed by the Committee).

#### 4.5.3 The Complaints Committee Resolution

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If, after establishing the facts, the Committee consider that the complaint is made out, they will uphold the complaint. If they consider that the complaint is not made out, they will dismiss the complaint. They will make these decisions on the balance of probabilities.

It is not within the powers of the Complaints Committee to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils, or parents. The Committee may make recommendations on these or any other issues to the Principal, as appropriate.

#### 4.5.4 Stage 3

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If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the decision of the Complaints Committee under Stage 2, they may request a hearing with a panel or decide to renew the complaint in writing to ADEK.

#### 4.5.5 Requesting a Hearing

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The Complainant may request a hearing via the Complaints Coordinator ([communication@amityabudhabi.ae](mailto:communication@amityabudhabi.ae)) within 5 working days of the decision. The request will only be considered if you have completed the procedures at Stages 1 and 2. The request should include:

- All the grounds of the request.
- A copy of all relevant documents as well as the desired outcome.
- A list of the documents which the complainant believes to be in the School's possession and wishes the Committee to consider.

The Complaints Coordinator will acknowledge your request in writing within 24 hours of receipt. The hearing panel will consist of a minimum of three individuals who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint and are not directly involved in the matters of the complaint. One member of the panel shall be independent from the management and running of the school. The Complainant may ask who has been appointed to sit on the Panel.

Within 2 working days, the Complaints Coordinator will send the Complainant a 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.

The Complainant may be accompanied to the hearing if they wish. If they wish to be accompanied by a legally qualified person acting in their professional capacity, they should notify the School at least 5 days before the hearing. Copies of additional documents you wish the Committee to consider should be sent to the Principal's PA at least 3 clear days prior to the hearing.

The Principal is required to chair the Panel, unless he is the subject of the complaint.

All statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. The Principal's PA will be asked to take minutes of the proceedings. All present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes. All those present will 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.

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 the hearing is terminated due to behaviour, 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.

The Principal may, at his/her discretion, adjourn the hearing for further investigation. This may include an adjournment to take legal advice.

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 recommendations may be notified orally at the hearing and shall be confirmed in writing by electronic mail within 3 working days. Reasons for the decision will be provided. The decisions, findings and any recommendations will be sent to the complainant, the Principal and, where relevant, any person about whom the complaint has been made and will be made available on the school premises for inspection by the Principal or the School's owners.

A hearing before the Complaints Committee 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.

#### 4.5.6 Procedures to be followed at a hearing

This is the procedure that will normally be followed by the Complaints Committee and is designed to ensure that all parties have the opportunity to present their views. The meeting will take the form of a "round the table" hearing, where all parties and the Panel are present in the same room. Present in the room throughout the hearing will be:

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

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.

#### Suggested agenda

1. Welcome and introductions by the Chairman.
2. Presentation of complaints.

If the complainant is present:



- a) Hearing of the Complainant – Where two people are present, it is often more helpful if one undertakes the responsibility of presentation and answering of questions.
  - b) The Committee and Principal may ask questions of the complainant 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.
  - c) If the complaint is about another party (e.g. a member of staff, a parent) they may now put their case, explaining the reasons for the decision and consideration and calling witnesses if necessary.
  - d) The parents and Committee Members may ask questions of the Principal for clarification.
  - e) The Principal is invited to make any further relevant points.
  - f) The complainant is then invited to make any further relevant points.
3. When the Panel is satisfied that it has established facts sufficient for it to make its decision, the Principal, as chair, may bring the hearing to a close and inform the parties that they will be notified in writing of the decision, normally within 3 working days.
  4. The complainant and Principal leave together with any witnesses, supporters or representatives.

Legal advice: if, during the hearing, parents introduce legal points on which the Committee feel they will need advice, they will consider one of two options:

1. the Committee 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
2. if the Committee feel that an immediate response is required, they may adjourn the hearing to take telephone advice from the School's lawyers.

#### 4.6 Complaints record and confidentiality

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A written record will be kept of all complaints. This will specify whether they are resolved at Stage 1 or 2 or proceeded to a panel hearing. Correspondence, statements and records relating to complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by the Regulations or policies that determine the school's operation within the context of Abu Dhabi, or where disclosure is required in the course of a school's inspection or under other legal authority.

## 4.7 Circulation

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This policy is addressed to the School's Senior Leadership Team, all members of the teaching and pastoral staff, including school medical staff and nursing staff, parents and pupils.

## 4.8 Concerns over child safety

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Separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection issue.

A concern about the safety of a 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.

Note that separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection issue or if the Principal excludes or asks a students to leave and the parents seek a panel review of that decision.

## 4.9 Assessment and Record Keeping

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The School keeps a record of all meetings held between the members of the committee and the complainant (being a Parent/Guardian, or teachers or stakeholders) in order to present the same to ADEK if requested.

### 1. Contacting ADEK (and/or Inspection team)

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The School is inspected by ADEK. Parents have the right to contact an inspector if they have a complaint. ADEK will usually expect parents to have followed the School's formal complaints procedure before contacting them. However, you can report your concerns to ADEK on +971 615 0000 or you can write to the ADEK Private Schools and Quality Assurance Sector Office.

ADEK
Private Schools and Quality Assurance Sector PO Box 36005 Abu Dhabi UAE

### 5.1 Methodology to receive and resolve Customer complaints made to ADEK

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The Customer Services Division in ADEK receives complaints through the Abu Dhabi Government Call Centre. They will directly forward the School-related complaint to the School email account giving the School opportunity to respond to any cases raised. The School has three days to reply to this email.

The School will collaborate with the Customer Service Division.

## 2. The School's Owners and Governors

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- Establish a School Complaints Committee.
- Oversee the work of the School Complaints Committee.
- Ensure that the School Complaints Committee deals with complaints professionally, effectively and promptly.

## 3. The Principal

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- The School Principal: Sarah Wade.
- The School provides ADEK with the name and contact information of the Chair of the School Complaints Committee, in order to facilitate communication with him/her.

## 4. Associated documents

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Policy 21: School's Complaints Committee Corresponding to Article (26) of the Organising Regulation ADEK Circular (LA/135/R/2018) dated 20th May 2018 regarding Customer complaints ADEK Complaints Record.

## 5. Monitoring and Review

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This Policy is reviewed annually or sooner and ratified by the School's Advisory Board.

## 6. Approved by

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Principal on behalf of the School: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairman of Advisory Board: \_\_\_\_\_

## Change History Record

Version No.	Description of Change	Owner	Date of Issue
1.0	Adoption of policy	Principal	Aug 2015
2.0	Revision	Principal	Aug 2017
3.0	Revision	Principal	March 2018
4.0	Template revision and update to responsibilities	PA to the Principal	March 2018
5.0	Significant change in light of new ADEK circular regarding necessity for reporting and Complaints Committee structure	Principal	April 2019
6.0	Added the complaints Committee members	PRE	Feb 2020
6.1	Review and edit of the Policy	Principal	Nov 2020
6.2	Update, review and edit of the Policy	Head of Communications	Apr 2022
6.3	Review and update of the policy	Principal	Sept 2022

## 7. Appendix

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### 11.1 Complaints Form

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

What is the nature of the complaint? (Please tick)	
<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"/> Timetabling
<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)	
Please give details of your complaint	
Date/s of incident	Time/s
If you are complaining about someone's behaviour please give the names of any witnesses to the incident/s	

Action taken	
Name	Position
Signed	Date