



Complaints Policy

With reference to -

The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

Introduction

Alamiyah School is committed to providing excellence in Montessori Education for children and families. We seek to achieve this by partnering with parents and working in an open and responsible way to build the trust and respect of all the families we serve. We believe that the only way to continually improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of pupils, parents and staff, and in particular by responding positively to concerns and resolving issues as they arise.

Aims

Our aims are to:

- ensure that providing any feedback both positive and negative is as easy as possible
- promptly resolve any concerns/complaints swiftly and confidentially (if appropriate)
- treat every person fairly and courteously throughout the complaints process
- place the child at the centre of any complaints process
- provide information in a timely manner about any action taken to resolve the complaint.
- be as transparent as possible about the situation
- maintain objectivity and independence in investigations into complaints
- be as responsive as possible throughout the complaints process



Approach

Definition:

Alamiyah School defines a concern as any expression of dissatisfaction (with a member of staff, or management) to any member of staff

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction in the form of a formal letter addressed to the headteacher requiring a formal response.

There is a clear difference between a concern and a complaint. The School takes informal concerns seriously and as a result few develop into formal complaints. Most concerns can be resolved quickly and informally, however in rare cases where concerns cannot be acceptably resolved, then the formal procedure should be followed.

An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.

We review our complaints policy and procedures annually.

Purpose

The complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all concerns and complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

Responsibility for Action

Principal of School and Board of Trustees

Complaints Procedure

Points to Note:

- The School has **concerns forms** which are available to parents at all times.



- Complainants are aware of the persons to which they can speak to in order to raise any issues. The first point of contact is their child's teacher or key teacher (in children's house). If the issue cannot be resolved by the teacher then the Headteacher will usually get involved. If the issue cannot be solved at this point then it is escalated to the Principal and then Board of Trustees.
- Complainants have access to multiple methods of communication with the School in order to raise a concern. Complainants can express their concern in person, over the telephone or in writing using a form or staff emails.
- Recordkeeping - We keep a **log of all concerns and complaints** and their outcomes, whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to the Senior Management Team or the Board of Trustees.
- Records are made available to Ofsted/HMI inspectors.
- A record of the number of complaints registered during the previous school year is available at the end of this policy.

Our operational procedure for complaints is as follows :

Stage 1 –Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most concerns will be resolved swiftly and informally. Should you, as a complainant, have a concern or complaint then you can contact the school. This can be done in person, by telephone or in writing a letter or email to the admin@alamiyahschool.org email address. The administrative team will ensure that the concern/complaint is taken to the relevant person to be dealt with.

If the concern or complaint relates to an issue regarding the school they should contact their child's teacher or key teacher (Children's House) at the earliest opportunity.

In many cases, the matter will be resolved promptly, without delay and with the utmost priority to the parent/carer's satisfaction.

In the case where the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, or if the complaint relates to them, he/she will consult the Headteacher. If the complaint relates to the Headteacher, the parent/carer



will contact the Principal, if the complaint relates to the Principal then the concern will be addressed to the Board of Trustees.

The member of staff dealing with the issue will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. The Principal will be informed of the parent/carer's complaint or concern.

If the complainant is a staff member then they should contact their line manager or the Headteacher.

Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or in the event that the two parties fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the complainant will be advised to pursue their complaint formally in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 – How to register a Complaint

If the concern or complaint cannot be resolved to provide a satisfactory outcome on an informal basis, then the complainant should put their complaint in writing to the Principal.

If the complaint relates to the Principal, the complainant may instead write to the Board of Trustees. The Principal/Board of Trustees will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two working days and complete a **Complaints Record Form**.

Stage 3 – Investigation

The Principal/Board of Trustees will send a letter of acknowledgment to the complainant advising that the complaint has been received and will be investigated as a matter of priority.

The Principal will investigate the issues that have been raised. In most cases he/she, or another **Trustee/Governor** who is detached to the complaint, will speak to or meet the complainant concerned to discuss the matter within 10 working days of receiving the complaint in writing. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.



It may be necessary for the Principal or another Trustee/Governor to carry out further investigations and these will begin as soon as possible. The Principal/Trustee/Governor will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Principal/Governor is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and complainant will be informed of this decision in writing within 28 days of receipt of the complaint by the Principal/Governor. The Principal/Governor will give reasons for his/her decision.

The school keeps written complaints from parents/carers/public in a complaints file. If the complainant is still not satisfied with the decision, they should request a panel hearing under Stage 4 of this procedure.

Stage 4 – Panel Hearing

If, following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, a complainant can request a panel hearing. The complainant would be expected to put this request in writing to the Principal of the school or the Board of Trustees, giving reasons why they remain dissatisfied. On receipt of this request a Complaints Panel will be convened.

The **Trustees** are responsible for appointing the panel. The panel will consist of three people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school.

The Trustees will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within **15 working days** of receiving the written notice from the complainant.

Complainant will be invited to the Complaints Panel hearing by letter and given at least **7 working days notice of the scheduled date and time**. If the complaint is made outside of term time, it may not be possible to meet this deadline.

The complainant may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be permitted.

An external mediator can also be invited to help settle the complaint but this person should be acceptable to both parties; listen to both sides and offer advice. A mediator has no legal powers but can help to define the problem, review the action so far and suggest further ways in which it



might be resolved. If an external mediator is called in then the other party should be asked if they would like to bring in a supportive person of their own choice.

The role of a Mediator

- The mediator keeps all discussions confidential.
- The mediator can hold separate meetings with the staff at the school and the complainant, prior to the panel meeting, if this is decided to be helpful.
- The mediator keeps an agreed written record of any meetings that are held and of any advice he or she gives.
- These records shall be supplied to all parties no later than **3 working days prior to the hearing.**
- *Assessors and Mentors from Montessori Education (UK) are appropriate (objective) persons to be invited to act as mediators.*

Role of the Complaints Panel

1. Reject the complaint in whole or in part
2. Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
3. Make a decision on the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
4. Make recommendations of changes to the School's policies or procedures to make sure that incidents of a similar nature do not occur again.

The Complaints Panel will make a concerted effort to resolve the complaint where possible, within a reasonable timeframe.

The Complaints Panel upon reaching a decision, will write to notify the complainant within 5 working days of the hearing of the decision.

In exceptional circumstances where further investigation is required, the Complaints Panel will decide how this will be carried out.



After careful consideration of all of the facts they consider relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The decision and recommendations, shall be made available for consideration at the school by the Board of Trustees and by the School Principal.

The Complaints Panel will write to the complainant, within 10 working days of the hearing informing them of the decision and the reasons for it and setting out any recommendations.

The decision of the Panel will be final.

The Complaint Panel's decision and recommendations, if any, where relevant, will be shared with the staff member (if relevant) involved in the investigation.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the complaint procedure the school and the complainant will want to 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.
- An explanation.
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- An assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur.
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint are not released.
- An undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint.
- An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld.
- An explanation that, following investigation, the concern is not substantiated by the evidence.
- An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence.



The role of the Area Child Protection Committee.

If you are concerned about the welfare of a child the Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Team should be contacted immediately.

If a child appears to be at risk, the School follows the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Team from Integrated Family Services at the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham outlined in the Safeguarding Children Policy.

In these cases, both the complainant and the School are informed and the Principal will work with the Local Safeguarding Team to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint is conducted followed by any appropriate actions.

Monitoring and review

The Trustees monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. All stage 2 complaints received by the school will be logged by the Principal, and records how they were resolved. Trustees examine this log on an annual basis.

Trustees take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents and staff, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

If a complainant believes the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint, then the complainant may make representations to the Secretary of State.

All Senior Management Team members are fully aware of procedures and trained accordingly and will be involved in reviewing the policy. All staff are aware that the Principal and Board of Trustees will handle all formal complaints.

Record Keeping

Complaints records will be held on file for 5 years from the date the complaint was lodged. After this time they will be deleted and destroyed.



Key information will include the date, the nature of the complaint, who was informed, what action was taken, and whether the complaint was resolved at a preliminary stage or proceeded to a Panel Hearing.

All complaints cases will be handled with confidentiality and will not be accessible to any unauthorised personnel, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection, under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, requests access.

Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection or as requested by the Registration Authority; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

The School's complaints procedure is included in information given to new parents and carers, it is available in the parent handbook which all parents/carers are provided and a copy of this policy is available on the school website with details of how to register a complaint.

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>Number of informal complaints/concerns</i>	<i>Number of formal complaints</i>
2017/2018		

This policy was adopted at a meeting at Alamiyah School held on:

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Signed on behalf of the Alamiyah School:

Date of Review: July 2018

