



المدرسة الأمريكية
للإبداع العلمي
AMERICAN SCHOOL
OF CREATIVE SCIENCE

Escalation Policy

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1. Purpose of Policy and Guiding Principles

The purpose of this policy is to address and resolve concerns and complaints raised by parents, students and other members of the school community fairly, promptly and consistently. The school treats a complaint as information that can improve provision, and no complainant will be disadvantaged as a result of raising a concern in good faith. The aim of this complaints procedure is to:

- Encourage informal resolution wherever possible.
- Ensure accessibility and clarity for all stakeholders.
- Maintain impartiality and a non-adversarial approach.
- Set clear, reasonable timelines for responses and updates.
- Conduct full and fair investigations when required.
- Uphold confidentiality at all times.
- Offer appropriate remedies when concerns are upheld.
- Provide feedback to senior leaders to facilitate continuous improvement.
- Keep complainants informed of progress at each stage, including where a timeline has to be extended.
- Make reasonable adjustments so the procedure is accessible to every family, including those who need translation or support to set out a concern in writing.
- Ensure decisions are lawful, reasonable, proportionate and based on evidence.
- Ensure no student or parent is treated less favorably as a result of making a complaint.

2. Legislation, Regulation and Guidance

This policy is written to comply with, and should be read alongside:

- The KHDA Parent–School Contract and the regulatory requirements of the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA).
- The UAE School Inspection Framework, in particular the standards relating to partnerships with parents and the community, and to the protection, care, guidance and support of students.
- Federal Law No. 3 of 2016 concerning Child Rights (Wadeema’s Law), where a concern or complaint indicates that a child may be at risk.
- The accreditation standards of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), including the expectation that stakeholder feedback informs school improvement.

- BEAM Network governance requirements and the terms of reference of the school's Governing Board.
- Applicable UAE data protection legislation governing the handling and retention of personal information.

3. Definitions and Scope

3.1 Definitions

The school distinguishes between a concern and a complaint:

- **A concern** is an expression of worry or doubt about an issue the complainant considers important, for which reassurance or clarification is sought.
- **A complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about an action the school has taken or has failed to take.

Most concerns are resolved at Stage 1 and never become complaints. Escalation is always available, but the school will make every reasonable effort to resolve matters at the earliest stage and at the level closest to the issue.

3.2 Who may use this procedure

This procedure may be used by parents and legal guardians of students on roll, by students themselves with age-appropriate support, and by others with a legitimate interest in the school. Anonymous complaints are recorded and are investigated where the information given makes that possible, although the school may be unable to provide an outcome to an anonymous complainant.

3.3 Matters within the scope of this policy

Complaints from parents about the school's inclusion provision and the support given to a student with additional learning needs are within the scope of this policy. These should first be raised with the Class Teacher or the Head of Inclusion and will then be managed through the stages below. The assessment or formal identification of special educational needs is dealt with under the Inclusion Policy.

3.4 Matters outside the scope of this policy

This policy does not apply to:

- Admissions decisions.
- The assessment or formal identification of special educational needs.
- Safeguarding and child protection matters, including allegations against a member of staff.
- Student exclusion.
- Whistle-blowing.
- Staff grievances and staff disciplinary matters.

- Criminal matters or allegations of financial impropriety.
- The statutory content of the Islamic Education and Moral, Social and Cultural Studies curricula, which is determined by the UAE Ministry of Education.
- Services delivered by third-party providers using the school's premises or facilities, which should be raised with the provider concerned.

Each of these is governed by a separate procedure. Where a complaint falls outside this policy, the complainant will be signposted to the correct route without delay rather than simply told the policy does not apply.

3.5 Safeguarding takes precedence

If at any stage a concern or complaint indicates that a child may be at risk of harm, the member of staff receiving it must pass it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately and without waiting for the next stage of this procedure. The complaints process is paused and the matter is handled under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The complainant will be told that the matter has been referred, but will not be given details of any safeguarding enquiry.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The complainant

A complaint is resolved more quickly where the complainant:

- Follows the stages of this procedure in order.
- Sets out the complaint clearly, with dates, times, the names of anyone involved and copies of relevant documents.
- States what outcome they are seeking.
- Responds to communication and deadlines promptly.
- Treats all those involved with courtesy and respect.
- Does not publish details of the complaint, or the names of staff or students involved, on social media.

4.2 The member of staff receiving a concern

Acknowledges within the timescale set out in Section 5, records the concern on the complaints tracker, resolves it where it falls within their authority, and escalates promptly and without defensiveness where it does not.

4.3 The investigating officer

Establishes the facts; interviews all relevant parties and keeps notes; considers records and written evidence and holds them securely; and prepares a written report for the Principal or the Review Panel setting out the findings and the options for resolution.

4.4 The Clerk to the Governing Board

Acts as the point of contact for the complainant and the Review Panel, circulates papers and evidence before the hearing, arranges the hearing, and records and circulates the minutes and the outcome.

4.5 The Chair of the Review Panel

Chairs the hearing, ensures everyone is treated with respect, and ensures all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the panel and have a fair opportunity to present their case.

4.6 The Principal

Is accountable for the operation of this policy, ensures the complaints tracker is maintained, and reports the number, nature and outcome of complaints to the Governing Board each term.

5. Raising a Concern – Stage 1

Most concerns are resolved quickly and informally. Parents are encouraged to raise a concern first with the member of staff closest to the issue, usually the Class Teacher, Subject Teacher or Supervisor.

So that the procedure is accessible to every family, a concern may be raised through any of the following channels:

- Directly with the relevant member of staff, in person, by telephone or by email.
- Through any member of the leadership team, at phase or whole-school level.
- Through the school reception, who will route the concern to the appropriate department.
- Through the online concern form published on the parent portal and linked in the description of official parent communication groups.

These channels are monitored daily. Urgent matters receive same-day follow-up. For all other concerns, staff acknowledge receipt within 24 hours during the working week, keep the parent informed, and aim to resolve the matter within 5 school days. The nature and outcome of every concern is recorded on the complaints tracker, including those resolved at this stage.

Time limits. A concern or complaint should be raised within one month of the incident, or within one month of the last incident where it concerns a series of related events. Matters raised outside this period will be considered where there were valid reasons for the delay and a fair investigation is still possible. Concerns received outside term time are treated as received on the first school day after the break.

Where the school cannot meet a timescale set out in this policy, it will agree a revised deadline with the complainant, confirm it in writing and explain the reason for the delay.

If the concern is not resolved at this stage, or the parent is not satisfied with the action taken, the matter moves to the formal process set out in Section 6.

6. Formal Complaints Process

The formal process consists of the following escalating stages: A formal complaint may be made in writing, by email, by telephone, in person, or by a third party acting on the complainant's behalf. Where a complainant needs assistance to put a complaint in writing, the school office will provide it.

Stage 2: Formal complaint

The concern is formally discussed with a relevant staff member (e.g. Coordinator or Head of Department) via email or face-to-face. Parents can contact the school reception or send an email to the staff member to make an appointment to address their concern should they choose to address this in face-to-face. Staff will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 2 school days, clarify the outcome the complainant is seeking, and set out the steps being taken. If not resolved within 5 school days, the complaint moves to Stage 3.

Stage 3: Complaint Heard by a Senior Leadership Team Member (SLT)

A member of the SLT acknowledges the complaint in writing within 2 school days. All complaints are logged internally for review and follow-up. The senior member will initiate a formal investigation, meeting with the complainant, interviewing witnesses if needed, and documenting all communication. A formal written response setting out the findings, the reasons for them and any action to be taken is provided within 10 school days of the complaint reaching this stage, or a revised timeline is agreed and confirmed in writing. If the complainant remains unsatisfied, the matter can escalate to Stage 4.

Stage 4: Complaint Heard by the Principal

Parents may contact the Principal's Executive Assistant, either via email or in person, to request an appointment with the School Principal to address their complaint directly. The complainant will be informed of their right to submit supporting documentation and attend the meeting. A written response outlining the Principal's decision will be provided within five school days following the meeting. The complainant may be accompanied at the meeting by a companion of their choice and should tell the school in advance who that will be; the school may decline a particular companion where there is a conflict of interest and will say so in good time so that alternative arrangements can be made. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a Review Panel hearing by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Board within 10 school days of the written response. Complaints that concern the Principal, a governor or the Governing Board are handled under Section 7.

Stage 5: Complaint Heard by a Review Panel

A request for a Review Panel must be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Board within 10 school days of the Stage 4 response. Requests received outside this period will be considered in exceptional circumstances. The Clerk acknowledges the request within 2 school days.

Convening the panel. The panel consists of three members: two members of the Governing Board who have had no prior involvement in the complaint, and one member who is independent of the management and running of the school. The panel elects its own chair. Where insufficient impartial governors are available, panel members are sourced from BEAM head office, and the school satisfies itself that anyone sourced in this way is suitably skilled, independent and impartial.

The Clerk aims to convene the hearing within 5 school days of the request. Where the complainant declines three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk will set a date and the hearing will proceed on written submissions. All written material is circulated to all parties at least 2 school days before the hearing.

At the hearing. The complainant and the school's representative each have the opportunity to present their case, call witnesses and respond to questions. The complainant may be accompanied. Legal representation is not encouraged but will be considered case by case. Once both parties have presented, they withdraw and the panel considers the evidence.

The outcome. The panel may uphold the complaint in whole or in part, or dismiss it in whole or in part. Where a complaint is upheld, the panel decides the action needed to resolve it and may recommend changes to school systems or procedures to prevent a recurrence. The findings and recommendations, together with the minutes, are given in writing to the complainant and, where relevant, to the subject of the complaint within 5 school days, and a copy is made available to the Principal. The decision of the Review Panel concludes the school's internal procedure.

Stage 6: Referral to the KHDA

If the complainant remains dissatisfied once the school's internal procedure is complete, they may refer the matter to the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA). The referral is made by the complainant, not by the school. The school will cooperate fully with any KHDA review and will provide the complaint record and supporting documentation on request. Nothing in this policy prevents a complainant from contacting the KHDA at any point, although the school encourages families to allow the internal stages to run first, as this is usually the fastest route to resolution.

Contact details for the KHDA:

Website <http://www.khda.gov.ae/en/aboutus/contactus.aspx>

Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) Block 8, Academic City,

P.O Box 500008, Dubai, U.A.E.

Tel: +971-4-3640000 Fax: +971-4-3640001 Email: info@khda.gov.ae

7. Complaints Against the Principal, a Governor or the Governing Board

A complaint about the Principal or a member of the Governing Board should be addressed to the Chair of the Governing Board through the Clerk to the Governing Board. A suitably skilled and impartial governor will carry out the Stage 3 and Stage 4 steps set out in Section 6.

Where the complaint concerns the Chair of the Governing Board, it should be directed to the Chairman.

Where the complaint concerns the Chair and Vice-Chair jointly, the Governing Board as a whole, or a majority of its members, an independent investigator appointed by the Chairman will conduct the formal investigation and issue the written response. Any subsequent Review Panel will be composed entirely of independent members sourced through BEAM.

At every point in this section, the principle is the same: no one investigates a complaint about themselves, and no one sits on a panel hearing a complaint in which they have had prior involvement.

8. Unreasonable, Persistent and Duplicate Complaints

8.1 Unreasonable behavior

The school treats every complaint seriously and assumes good faith. Very occasionally the way a complaint is pursued, rather than its substance, becomes unreasonable. This may be the case where a complainant:

- Repeats a complaint already considered and concluded under this procedure, without presenting new evidence.
- Pursues a complaint in a manner that is obsessive, harassing, defamatory or repetitive.
- Knowingly provides false information.
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded or outside the scope of this policy.
- Refuses to articulate the complaint, or to cooperate with this procedure and its timescales.
- Changes the substance of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Makes demands designed to cause disruption or to place excessive demands on school time.
- Seeks an outcome that is unrealistic or that the school has no power to deliver.

8.2 Steps the school will take

The school will take every reasonable step to address the concerns and will give a clear written statement of its position and of the options remaining. Where contact continues in a disruptive way, the school may put communication arrangements in place, including:

- A single named point of contact and a single email address.
- A limit on the number of contacts within a defined period, such as a fixed number each term.
- A request that the complainant engage a third party, such as the KHDA Parents' Liaison, to act on their behalf.

The school may stop responding to a complainant only where all of the following apply: it has taken every reasonable step to address the concerns; it has given a clear written statement of its position and of the complainant's options; and contact continues in a way the school believes is intended to cause disruption or inconvenience. The complainant will be told in writing that the school intends to stop responding and that any genuinely new complaint will still be considered. A decision to apply this section is taken by the Principal and recorded on the complaints tracker.

Any incident of aggression, threatening behavior or violence will be reported immediately to the police and confirmed in writing, and may result in an individual being barred from the school site.

8.3 Duplicate complaints

Where a complaint has been concluded and the same matter is raised again by a partner, family member or other individual, the school will consider whether there are aspects not previously examined or new information to take into account. If there are not, the new complainant will be told that the matter has already been investigated, that the internal process is complete, and that they may refer the matter to the KHDA. If there are new aspects, the procedure is followed again.

8.4 Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a high volume of complaints on the same subject, particularly from individuals unconnected with the school, it may respond by publishing a single response on the school website or by sending a common written response to all complainants. Complainants who remain dissatisfied may pursue the matter through the normal stages.

9. Meeting Expectations, Documentation and Timelines

All staff must know how to direct a parent who asks to speak to someone in school, so that families are never passed between departments or left without a named contact. Staff must ensure accuracy in communication. If uncertain, acknowledge the query and inform the parent that a confirmed response will follow within 2 school days. A log of all communications should be maintained.

Documentation

Any meetings from stage 2 and above between parents and School members, minutes should be taken and the minutes emailed to all parties within 3 school days. Copies of the minutes should be kept when the meeting involves parents and the school. Where the complaint does not relate to an individual student, the record is held centrally by the Principal's Executive Assistant.

If the issue is further escalated, the minutes should go to the next person in line of escalation, giving that person a way of reviewing what has already been discussed. In addition, a complaints tracker is completed at each stage to log all actions and communications. The tracker records the date received, the channel used, the stage reached, the person responsible, the action taken, the date of resolution and the outcome.

Meeting Expectation

- The complainant to explain their complaint
- The person hearing the complaint, or the Review Panel, to question the complainant
- At Stage 3, the Head of Section to explain the school's response
- At Stage 4, the Principal to explain the school's response
- At Stage 5, the school's representative to present the school's response to the Review Panel
- The complainant to be offered the opportunity to be accompanied at any meeting from Stage 3 onwards
- The person chairing to summarize the agreed actions and timescales, confirm them in writing, and set out the complainant's right to escalate

10. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

The school records the progress of every complaint, including the action taken at each stage, the stage at which it was resolved and the final outcome. Records include copies of correspondence and notes of meetings and telephone calls.

Complaint records are confidential. They are held securely by the lead investigator and are seen only by those investigating the complaint or sitting on a Review Panel. The details of a complaint, including the names of those involved, are not shared with the Governing Board as a whole, so that an impartial Review Panel can be convened if one is needed.

Records are kept only for as long as necessary, in line with applicable data protection law and the school's retention schedule. Where a complaint concerns an individual student, a copy is held on that student's file.

A member of staff who is the subject of a complaint will be told, will be given a fair opportunity to respond, and will be offered appropriate support. Complaints are not used as appraisal evidence unless the complaint is upheld and the matter is taken forward under the relevant staff procedure.

11. Learning from Complaints and Monitoring Arrangements

Complaints are treated as evidence for school improvement. The Principal reviews the number, nature, stage of resolution and outcome of complaints each term and reports a summary to the Governing Board. The Chair of the Governing Board and the Principal consider, while respecting confidentiality, whether any underlying issue points to a change needed in school systems or practice.

Themes arising from complaints feed into the School Improvement Plan and, where relevant, into the school's self-evaluation. Where a change is made as a result of a complaint, the school will say so, since visible action is what sustains parental confidence in the procedure.

The complaints tracker is maintained by the Principal's Executive Assistant. This policy is reviewed annually by the Principal and approved by the Principal and the Chair of the Governing Board. It is published on the school website and drawn to parents' attention at the start of each academic year.

12. Linked Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Behavior Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Staff Grievance Procedure and Staff Disciplinary Procedure
- Whistle-blowing Policy
- Parent–School Contract