



COMPLAINTS POLICY

	Date	Signed
Date reviewed	12.03.24	Debbie Gregg Managing Director
Date of next review	Feb 2025	

Number of complaints received during 2023 - NA

1. Introduction, Guiding Principles, Stages of Complaint

At AAEUK we are committed to meeting the needs of our students. However, we recognise that not everything goes well for everybody all of the time. There are times when misunderstandings, confusion or genuine concerns give rise to complaints. The intention of this policy is to provide a clear and transparent process that will enable such complaints to be dealt with promptly, fairly and proportionately.

For the purposes of this policy, a 'parent' shall include a guardian or any other person with parental responsibility for a child at the school. This policy applies to complaints from parents of current pupils and to parents of former pupils if the complaint was initially raised whilst the pupil was on the school roll.

This policy can be made available in large print or other more accessible format, if required. If assistance is required with making a complaint, for example because of a disability, parents should contact AAEUK Managing Director who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

All staff are made aware of this policy and are expected to familiarise themselves with the procedures for dealing with complaints to ensure they can be of most assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

The alternative learning provider's guiding principles in complaint resolution are:

- to give careful and prompt consideration to all complaints
- to seek to achieve a just and fair outcome, taking due account of all relevant evidence
- to attempt to resolve complaints through dialogue and mutual understanding, and at as early a stage as possible

The policy outlines three stages of complaint.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

Where timescales are given in 'working days', this is defined as Monday - Friday during term time (according to Herefordshire LEA). Complaints received during holiday periods will be dealt with as soon as is practicable but are likely to take longer to resolve due to the unavailability of relevant staff. Under such circumstances the complainant will be notified of any extension to the time scales and the reason(s) why an extension is necessary when the complaint is acknowledged.

If parents wish to know the number of formal complaints received in the preceding year, requests should be made to the Managing director, who will forward the information.

2. **Stage 1: Informal Resolution**

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns can be resolved quickly and informally. Parents with cause for concern or complaint should feel free to talk directly to a member of staff, to telephone, or write with the details of the issue that concerns them.

We will acknowledge a written notification of a concern by telephone, email or by letter within two working days of receipt. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the appropriate member of staff will arrange to speak with the complainant or invite them to a meeting within five working days of acknowledgement. This meeting may prompt further investigation or wider consultation but, in this event, this stage of the complaints process should be completed within five working days of the complaint being acknowledged. Safeguarding complaints will be forwarded to the Herefordshire LADO, for independent investigation.

Should the matter not be resolved within five working days of acknowledgement or in the event that the parent and member of staff fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parents will be advised to proceed with the complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

3. **Stage 2: Formal Resolution**

If a complaint has not been resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should make a formal complaint to the Director. This must be done in writing, stating explicitly that they wish to invoke the formal complaints procedure.

Formal complaints will be acknowledged in writing by the Director within two days of being received. In most cases, the Director will meet or speak to the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary, however, for the Director to conduct an investigation. Once the Director is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing, no later than 15 working days after the formal complaint was acknowledged. The Director will give reasons for the decision reached.

Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept. The complainant will be informed if due to exceptional circumstances any additional time is necessary to complete the investigation.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of the complaints procedure.

4. **Stage 3: Panel Hearing**

If a parent wishes to proceed to Stage 3 (following a failure to reach a resolution earlier in the complaints process) they should write to the Director, who is responsible for making the arrangements for convening a Panel Hearing. The letter should be addressed to Miss Debbie Gregg, using the AAEUK address. In the written request for a Panel Hearing, the parent should state the grounds of the complaint and the outcome desired. They should also send a list of all the documents that they believe to be in the school's possession that they consider relevant in the matter and that they wish the Panel to see.

The Proprietor will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days and will schedule a meeting of the Panel within 10 working days thereafter. The Panel appointed by the Proprietor will consist of at least one person not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint, whom shall be independent of the management and running of AAEUK. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend or relative, but legal representation is not usually appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel will reach a decision. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations shall be confirmed in writing to the parent and, where relevant, to the person complained about within five working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations will be available for inspection online, during a dedicated virtual meeting conducted by the Managing Director.

5. Record keeping and confidentiality

A written record will be kept by the Director of all formal complaints, including any action(s) taken by the AAEEK as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it is upheld) and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or progressed to a panel hearing.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously.

Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except as required by the Alternative Learning Providers, as detailed in paragraph 33 (k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014; namely, where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them, or where any other legal obligations prevail. In accordance with data protection principles under GDPR, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

6. Monitoring and review of complaints policy and procedures

The Managing Director will monitor the number and type of complaints received and the operation of the procedures set out in this policy. She will also review the policy at least annually to ensure it meets statutory requirements and continues to reflect best practice.