



AL AIN ACADEMY
ALDAR ACADEMIES

Parent Voice and Complaints Policy

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Parent Voice and Complaints Policy

Introduction

Al Ain Academy is a fantastic, growing community. As we grow, we recognise even further that the communication between our stakeholders is more vital. We work extremely hard to ensure our, parents, children, and staff are well-informed of upcoming events, children's progress and other issues which impact on our school family.

We recognise that, as with all schools and walks of life, the school does not always get things right. Communication is a two-way process and recent meetings have highlighted the roles of parents, teachers, students (age-appropriate) and admin/SLT.

This policy will outline the methods with which we aim to ensure effective parent voice at all levels of the school and the steps we take when a complaint is raised. It works in tandem with the School Communication Policy.

Regular communication

Email: At the start of each academic year, PIMs (Parent Information Meetings) are held for each year group outlining the learning and expectation of each year. At this meeting, staff emails are shared and teachers will have already sent an initial, welcome email ahead of this meeting. Email is encouraged as a fast, effective means to communicate with the teacher. The communication policy states that a teacher will aim to respond as soon as possible, though within 48 hours as a means of allowing for extenuating circumstances such as illness, meetings or school trips off site.

Telephone calls: On occasions, communication is best served through dialogue. Teacher and SLT judgement will be used if this is determined. It is vital that the school know their families well to ensure we are aware those families that respond better to a phone call than email. This may be used when a child has been hurt, level 2+ on the behaviour policy has been reached, or to prevent a series of email exchange.

Face to face meetings with parents: These meetings should be by appointment, either through the school reception, PRE or arranged with the teacher directly. If required, the teacher may request a 3rd party be present and written record of the meeting be documented if needed.

Face to face at the school gate: Where parents collect their children, we encourage teachers to interact with families at home time and discuss children's day and light-touch feedback on their progress. This creates strong relationships between staff and families. SLT are also present outside before and after school daily.

Weekly Newsletter: Each Friday, the school registrar sends a newsletter informing the parents of various events occurred in school, upcoming events and examples of the learning from specific year groups. This includes a weekly update from both Primary and Secondary SLT. Images, videos and text are all shared, celebrating the success of learning.

Informal, routine communication

Primary Year Group Newsletters: At the start of each term, parents receive a curriculum newsletter outlining the learning that will occur in each subject for their child. This includes specialist subjects such as PE, music, Arabic, Islamic and more. In addition, the year group leaders of each year group provide a further newsletter to parents each week, documenting more examples of the learning that has occurred that week, key dates specific to that year group and examples of the learning that will occur in the following week. Some parents choose to use this information to do some pre-learning.

Primary Stars of the Week: A weekly video sent to all families documenting the star of the week and rationale for each chosen member from each class.

Secondary long-term plans: At the start of each year, parents receive long term plans for every subject that their child will study. This provides a rough guide to the course content and the assessment methods used.

Secondary Student Planners: As children mature, the emphasis grows on the pupil to be responsible for the communication between school and home. The planner will document homework, upcoming events and can be used as a tool for communication between teacher and parents.

Formal academic communication

Parent Teacher Conference: The school invites parents in (they may wish to bring their child) for a formal meeting with the teacher to discuss their academic progress. In primary, this is every term. In secondary, this may be scheduled at key points in the school year, such as before options for Year 8 parents.

Reports: A termly report is sent to parents as per ADEK requirements. Term 1 and Term 2 are 'data-drop' reports with pastoral update, and term 3 provides an in-depth report on each subject as well as a pastoral update.

Letters to parents: Important events, issues, trips or medical events will be communicated in email and via letter. Letters are sent home via the students and usually require a written response.

Online sources

Social Media: Instagram and Facebook are widely used to update our community on exciting events, visits to school, celebrating success and extra curriculum fixtures.

School website: Largely used to promote Aldar Academies, facilities, and enrolments. Predominantly controlled by Aldar Education.

WhatsApp: Despite its prominence in the UAE, we do not encourage the use of Whatsapp as a communication tool between school and parents at any level. Parents are actively discouraged from using groups to voice concerns, and instead asked to engage with school directly using any of the above options.

Parent voice

At Al Ain Academy, we encourage our parents to have a voice in the learning of their children. When possible, SLT retain an 'open door' policy ensuring our community always feel valued. We use a range of workshops and groups to allow parents a voice in curriculum activities including:

Parent information meetings (PIMs): At the start of the academic year, parents are invited into school to hear an outlined plan of the learning. This presents opportunity for parents to meet with all of the teachers for the year group and share any suggestions / concerns.

School Governance Group (SGG): The school governing body. A group of nine parents, SLT, admin and Aldar representative responsible for Quality Assurance of the SLT and the school. The group has a key role in the success, vision and improvement of the school. Parents can apply annually to join the SGG and are required to share the experience / value they can bring to the SGG if successful.

Friends of AAA: An open invitational group. Friends of AAA meet termly to focus on the success of events in the community, encouraging enjoyment of school and collaboration between all stakeholders through events such as National Day, Iftar, charity events and much more.

AAA in the Community: Coffee mornings held in school on the first Tuesday of each month. These provide opportunity for parents to take part in workshops to support the home school link. These workshops include topics such as meeting the counsellor / Head of Inclusion, how to keep your child safe online, behaviour code of conduct, road safety, etc.

Parent concerns and complaints

The above-mentioned communication opportunities provide our community with ample opportunity for dialogue and engagement. At Al Ain Academy, we pride ourselves in the teaching and learning occurring daily, transparency with parents regarding assessments and the level of pastoral care offered to pupils by various staff including teachers, senior leaders, and the counsellor. Despite this, there are naturally issues that occur in any school that parents may feel unhappy with. As a school, we give careful time and consideration to all complaints and concerns, formal and informal, and take measured, appropriate action where required. With all concerns that are shared with school, we act with clarity and always endeavour to communicate an outcome to parents. We recognise that our community is a partnership and that at heart, both parents and school have the child's best interest at heart. This is integral to all complaint outcomes. All communication from the school will offer plenty of opportunity for dialogue with families before a final resolution is made to close the matter.

In the case of any complaint from a parent involving children/adults that are not within their family, the other person's confidentiality must always be respected. The school will not provide any information about other parties, to a complainant. This includes details of what sanctions or procedures have been adopted because of a complaint.

Complaints resolved in-school

At Al Ain Academy, we encourage parents to first contact their child's class teacher as soon as possible should they have a complaint. Since returning from Covid, there has been an increase in the number of low-level complaints regarding children unhappy due to other children in their class / break time. We encourage parents to contact their class teacher as soon as possible and these matters are usually resolvable swiftly.

If the concern cannot be resolved at teacher level, the parents and/or teacher may involve their line manager (Head of Year or Head of Faculty) to support the outcome of the concern. If a resolution is still not concluded, at this point a member of the SLT (firstly Assistant Principal, then Head of Primary/ Secondary and finally Principal) will support any concern / investigation and aim to support all stakeholders in the communication and resolution of the issue.

Sometimes parents request to speak to a member of SLT immediately. Whilst the school leadership maintains an open-door policy, the process is best served when parents speak with teachers first. If the complaint is of a serious nature, the member of SLT or principal, may deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

For all complaints, informal and formal, evidence is sought. Whether that be CCTV, or witness statements, school leaders and/or teachers will be transparent with parents that we have remained impartial and that evidence either corroborates or challenges their concern. All evidence is treated with strict confidentiality and CCTV of other children/staff are not shared.

It is desired that complaints are resolved by the school within 4-5 working days or sooner.

Serious complaints not resolved by the school

If the above process does not reach a satisfactory conclusion, the complaint is therefore deemed serious and the below steps will be followed. Furthermore, if a complaint reaches school that SLT / Aldar Education deem to be a serious complaint, the Executive Senior Leadership team (Principal, Head of Primary, Head of Secondary) will investigate the matter personally.

This will involve the following steps:

- The parent will be requested that the complaint be documented in writing (either in English or Arabic with the PRE providing assistance if required).
- ESLT will launch an investigation into the complaint. This will be as impartial as possible, involving witness statements, any documentation, CCTV or any further evidence. If the complaint regards a member of the ESLT, or if the parents / school feel that the ESLT cannot investigate the incident impartially, a member of the Aldar Education HQ team will be requested to assist.
- Once evidence is gathered, parents will receive a verbal and written communication regarding the outcome of the investigation. School will document any meetings / feedback to parents regarding the outcome.

If parents are still unsatisfied with the outcome of an investigation, a panel consisting of 3 people who have not been involved in the complaint, one being a member of the School Governance Group and one being external to the school staff (Aldar Director or SLT from other school) will convene. The panel will be presented with all gathered evidence. The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting with the panel if they wish. The

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outcomes of this panel meeting will be documented and communicated with the relevant stakeholders, whilst retaining confidentiality

The school will invite the parents to contact ADEK regarding their concerns. All investigation paperwork and documents will then be shared by the school with ADEK if requested (whilst maintaining any confidentiality). Parents will also be invited to contact ADEK / Aldar HQ regarding their concerns, should they have a complaint regarding the actions and/or inactions of the Principal.

When parents have a complaint about another child or staff member, the outcome of the complaint will be shared (e.g. an appropriate course of action as per policy) but parents will not be informed of any detailed consequences or capability outcomes to protect the confidentiality of said child or staff member.

The purpose of both the serious and informal complaints policy, is for a satisfactory solution to be found for all parties that considers the well-being and welfare of all children and staff at the heart of every decision. Where behaviour issues have occurred, the behaviour policy will be followed in-line with ADEK's own behaviour policy. The behaviour policy is available for all parents.

If a teacher has a complaint about a child or parent, the above procedures will also be followed based on whether school determines the concern to be routine or serious in nature.

When an investigation will not occur

Al Ain Academy reserves the right to not investigate a concern if the issue is deemed to be routine and second hand in nature. For example, a parent has a friend who is upset because of something that happened in school and wants to speak on their behalf. In these instances, the school requires that the people affected approach the school themselves. The school does not act on hearsay. However, if the nature of the complaint is serious, the ESLT may still determine to investigate or contact the family directly to give them opportunity to share.

Logging serious complaints

All complaints escalated to SLT level, are stored on a complaints register. This register lists the nature of the complaint, other relevant information, which member of SLT dealt with the complaint, and how it was resolved. These complaints are discussed with the School Governance Group on a yearly basis, as part of school review and improvement.

ADEK involvement

Parents are encouraged to follow the above-mentioned processes to ensure a strong relationship between school and parents. However, Al Ain Academy recognises that ADEK have their own complaints department and parents are within their right to bring issues to the attention of ADEK if they wish. When ADEK inform school of a complaint, the above process will begin in accordance with the level of concern (routine or serious) and the parents will be informed of the outcome of the concern directly from the school.

Language barriers

As an international school, we recognise that our stakeholders reach a variety of nations and languages. School will always endeavour to communicate in the language that our parents / pupils feel most comfortable in understanding for clarity. Where possible, a translator will be offered for verbal communication and formal, written correspondence will be translated into both home language and English.