

# Complaints Policy 2023-2024

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This policy and procedure have been created for and available to:

- Students
- Parents
- All Amber staff, homestay families, education guardians and coordinators

Amber Guardianships recognises that there may be legitimate concerns or complaints from students, staff, schools, parents or homestays relating to Amber Guardianships. As a company we encourage these concerns or complaints being made known to Amber Guardianships staff so that they can be addressed in partnership with us, and we can continuously improve our service.

The option is open for the complainant to have their complaints reviewed externally by AEGIS (the Association for Education and Guardianships of International Students).

If students, parents or members of staff have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated with care and seriousness and in accordance with this Complaints Policy.

## Aim of The Policy

- To ensure that all complaints are responded and resolved in a timely manner.
- To ensure that all complaints are treated with dignity and respect throughout the process within Amber Guardianships.
- To ensure that the complaints procedure is readily accessible, for example published in all handbooks with a timescale for review and more easily accessible feedback.
- To ensure the policy and procedures should be regularly reviewed.
- To ensure that staff, parents and students know where to file a complaint and who to pass it onto when it is first written.

## Definition & Purpose

Amber Guardianships defines a complaint as 'any expression of dissatisfaction (with Amber Guardianship, with a member of staff, or with Guardians representative) that requires a formal response.

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

Amber Guardianships will:

- Make every effort to deal with complaints informally and at an early stage.

- Take all concerns and complaints seriously.
- Resolve all complaints within 28 working days of the complaint being received.
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with in line with the procedures set out in this document.
- Ensure that, where appropriate, a full and fair investigation of the issue is undertaken.
- Ensure that no-one, including pupils, are penalised for making a complaint in good faith.
- Keep a written record, for at least three years, of all complaints, the action taken and at what stage they were resolved.
- Review regularly at senior management level, the written record of complaints and their outcomes.
- A record of formal complaints and their outcomes is kept by Harry Lee, CEO of Amber Education Ltd. in electronic form regardless of whether they were upheld.

## Confidentiality

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and Amber Guardianships maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint judged on its own merit). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

## Time Frame for Dealing with Complaints

- If a student, parent or staff wishes to make a complaint, they can contact a member of Amber Guardianships by email or telephone to discuss the complaint. The staff member will speak with the complainant about their complaint and explain the options which are available to them.
- The details of the complaint will be recorded and the Operations Manager will open a new incident file..
- The Operations Officer will discuss with the complainant and obtain all related information and a timeline of events. The Operations Manager will record it and report the matter to the Project Manager. This person becomes the Senior Manager in charge of the incident.
- The Operations Manager must send a reply to the complainant on the same day as the complaint is received. The reply could be in the form of a holding email, allowing further time to look into their grievance.
- A final response will be drafted, acknowledging the complaint and presenting a solution, where possible.

## Procedure of the complaints

Our complaints procedure is in two steps and we hope to find a resolution to any complaint at the earliest possible stage.

### **Step 1 - Informal Resolution**

Many complaints can be resolved quickly and informally. You can speak to any member of staff about your complaint, no matter how small. A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

If you make an informal complaint:

1. It will be acknowledged immediately (if made in person or over the phone), or within 1 working day if made via email (please remember that the office is open Monday to Friday, 09:30 – 18:30).
2. We may ask you further questions, to repeat and clarify information and/or to provide evidence (photos, for example) to support your complaint.
3. We will investigate the concern or complaint;
4. We will tell you when and how you will get an outcome (result) - this will be within 2 working days.
5. We may give you an 'action plan' to tell you what will happen next.
6. You will be asked to confirm if you are happy with the solution.
7. We will keep a confidential record of your complaint.

### **Step 2 - Formal Complaint**

If the complainant is not satisfied with how the complaint has been handled, they can make a formal complaint.

Please email or post a letter directly to the Operations Manager. To make a complaint, please contact the Amber Guardianships UK Office by email to:

Joey Tang,  
Operations Manager,  
joey.tang@amberedu.co.uk  
[AG@amberedu.co.uk](mailto:AG@amberedu.co.uk)

OR  
Phone +44 20 77340274

Or in person

Amber Education Services UK Ltd.  
2nd Floor  
Kingsland House  
122-124 Regent Street  
London, W1B 5SA  
UK

If the complaint is about the Operations Manager, please email or write to Alex Leung, the Project Manager (alex.leung@amberedu.com.hk).

- Please write as much detail as possible, include names and dates if applicable and how you want your complaint to be resolved.
- We will respond initially to the complainant within 24 hours.
- Investigate the concern or complaint – this may take some time but in any event they will keep the complainant informed of progress made;
- Report back to the complainant formally in writing no later than 28 working days;
- We may invite you to a formal meeting to discuss your case further.
- You will receive the outcome to your complaint within 28 working days.
- We will keep a confidential record of your complaint.
- A written record of all complaints will be kept, in chronological order, of all correspondence, subsequent responses and action taken.

### **Step Three- Referral of the Matter to AEGIS**

If you are still unhappy or feel you have been treated unfairly, you can ask for help from AEGIS.

You can write to them here:

Yasemin Wigglesworth

Executive Officer Association for the Education and Guardianship of International Students (AEGIS)

The Wheelhouse,  
Bond's Mill Estate,  
Bristol Road,  
Stonehouse,  
Gloucestershire,  
GL10 3RF  
+44 (0) 1453 821293  
[www.aegisuk.net](http://www.aegisuk.net)

You should write details about how you have already tried to resolve your complaint with Amber Guardianships and include any supporting documents, including the written outcome of your complaint.

AEGIS is an independent registered charity that will give impartial support to parents who have an ongoing complaint that cannot be resolved directly with the guardianship organization.

## How Amber Guardianships Staff Handle Complaint

Amber Guardianships staff should:

- Provide a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration.
- Be sensitive towards the issue and thoroughly interview the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved;
- Be considerate of records and other relevant information.
- Interview staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint;
- Analyse information-
- Effectively liaise with the complainant as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Identify solutions and recommend courses of action to resolve the problems-
- Be mindful of the timescales to respond; and respond to the complainant in plain and clear language responding to complaints in a timely manner.
- Make sure that they conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.
- Ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of the legislation around complaints including the Equality Act 2010, Data Protection Act 2019 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- Be understanding about the feelings of the complainants and be open-minded.

## Recording Complaints

Following the resolution of a complaint, the Head Office will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal step or beyond.

Record keeping is done to enable any patterns of concern to be monitored. Key information will be included as part of the complaint, such as:

- The date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of the member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- The action that has been taken as a result of those complaints.

Amber Guardianships are obligated under the General Data Protection Regulation to keep copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations) for no longer than is necessary.

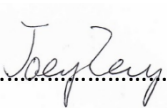
Initially most complaints will be oral. There should not be a requirement for the complainant to put their complaint in writing at the informal stage. However, Amber Guardianships is aware that English may not be the complainant's first language. Amber Guardianships will provide additional support, including interpretation support.

\*Under FOI and the Data Protection Acts, details of the complaint should not be shared within the company.

## Review

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy was last reviewed on 1st May 2023

Signed:  .....

Next review date: May 2024