



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Policy date:	September 2026
Date of next review:	September 2027
Owner:	Clerk to Governors
Leadership Team:	Senior Leadership Team
Intended audience:	Pupils, parents and staff
Location:	School Portal, Governor Portal and website

1. Introduction

Haileybury School ('the School') has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Policy and Procedure. This policy is made available to parents on the school website. A copy of this policy, and details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year is set out at paragraph 10 of this paragraph and can also be obtained from the Clerk to Governors¹.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Haileybury will also make available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils who request it, and on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year.

2. Aims

The aims of this policy and procedure is to provide a framework for the resolution of complaints which:

- a. allows for their resolution informally and sets out the School's formal procedures where this is not achievable;
- b. is easily accessible and publicised, simple to understand and use and impartial and non-adversarial;
- c. enables a full and fair investigation where appropriate and respects people's desire for confidentiality;
- d. addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- e. provides information to the School's Executive Leadership team (ELT) so that services can be improved and any systemic issues can be identified and addressed; and
- f. helps to create a culture of safety, equality and protection.

3. Scope and application

"Parent(s)" in this policy means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a pupil to whom the complaint relates.

References to **working days** mean Monday to Friday, when the School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website. In the event that the application of this definition is likely to introduce excessive delays, due to intervening School holidays, the School's approach is to take sensible and reasonable steps so as to minimise any hardship or unfairness arising from such delays.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School. This policy should not be used to appeal exclusions; there is an alternative process for this set out in the School's Permanent Exclusion, Suspension, Removal and Review Policy and Procedures, which can be found on the [Policies page](#) of the School's website and on the Policies page of the [School Portal](#).

Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils. The School will seek to respond to any complaint addressed to the Admissions department (or if about the Admissions department) to the Head, in a timely manner and such response falls outside of this complaints procedure.

¹ Call: + 44 (0)1992 706212 or email: clerktogovernors@haileybury.com .

This procedure may also be used by pupils who are current boarders to raise their own complaints about boarding provision and is drafted with regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (2022).

The School will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this policy.

The School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints.

If appropriate, the School will acknowledge that a complaint is upheld, wholly or in part. In addition, it may offer:

- a. an explanation;
- b. an admission that it could have been handled differently or better;
- c. an assurance that the School will try to ensure that the matter complained of will not happen again and an explanation of the steps taken in this respect;
- d. an undertaking to review policies or procedures;
- e. an apology.

Requests for financial awards (for example, claims for compensation, damages or fee refunds) are beyond the scope of the School's Complaints Policy and Procedures.

Regardless of the nature of a complaint and whether or not it is upheld, parents are not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on staff, pupils or parents for reasons of data protection and confidentiality.

The School encourages anyone else with concerns about the School's operation to raise them with the School in writing to either the Master or the Chair of Governors, setting out their concerns and the action sought.

Many concerns are addressed informally and they are dealt with entirely satisfactorily on that basis. Nothing in this document is intended to inhibit the informal free flow of information and comment between pupils, parents and the various responsibility holders within the School. However, where matters cannot be resolved informally, these Procedures provide a process for matters to be dealt with on a formal basis where needed.

4. Data Protection Complaints

Complaints relating to the School's handling or processing of personal data should be made in the first instance to the Chief Financial and Operations Officer (CFOO) , who is the School's Data Protection Lead. Such complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the separate process set out in the School's Data Protection Policy.

Where a complaint raises both data protection issues and other matters falling within the scope of this Complaints Policy and Procedure, the School will consider the appropriate procedure for dealing with each aspect of the complaint and will explain this to the complainant.

5. What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It might be about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if you believe that the School has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done, or acted unfairly.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in

which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

6. Timescales

The School aims to resolve all complaints efficiently and promptly and parents are encouraged to bring any matter causing concern to the School's attention as soon as possible. Whenever possible, a complaint should be raised within three months of the incident, or where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The School will however, consider complaints made within up to 12 months if exceptional circumstances apply. A complaint raised after three months should therefore include details of the issue which led to the delay.

Timescales for each stage of the School's complaints procedure are set out below. It is expected that the management of every complaint will progress in a timely manner. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay to the timescales for any stage of the complaints procedure (for example, other bodies investigating aspects of the complaint) the School will notify the parent and inform them of the new timescales as soon as possible.

Complaints raised in the School holidays will usually be deemed to have been received on the first working day after receipt.

If a parent commences legal action against the School in relation to their complaint, the Master or the Chair of Governors will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those proceedings have been concluded.

7. Haileybury operates a three-stage process for complaints as set out below.

7.1 Stage One (Informal Complaint)

It is hoped that most complaints or concerns can usually be resolved quickly and satisfactorily, through discussion with the appropriate member of staff. As Haileybury operates a House system, if parents have a complaint it is usually most appropriate for them to contact their child's Housemistress or Housemaster (HM) first. In most cases the matter will be resolved quickly and easily. An informal complaint can also be made to any member of staff.

An informal complaint can be made in writing, by telephone or in person. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the matter may be referred to another member of school staff (see the list below for examples of "Responsibility Holders"). If this is the case, the parent(s) should be informed which staff member will deal with the complaint. Whether the informal complaint is made in writing, in person or by telephone, the relevant staff member will acknowledge the complaint within three working days of its receipt in term time (in holiday and half term periods, within two weeks).

The Responsibility Holder will inform the Deputy Master or relevant Deputy Head who manages them (copied via email to file@haileybury.com - the inbox whereby the School monitors all parental concerns) on receipt of an informal complaint. Where the complaint is made verbally, the relevant member of staff will include a note of the discussion. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or in the event that the member of staff and the parent(s) fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parent(s) will be advised of their ability to proceed with their complaint under Stage Two of this complaints procedure.

Responsibility holders:

If your complaint is related to:	Please contact:
Your child's Housemaster/Housemistress, the School's disciplinary arrangements, the pastoral support of the School or any form of bullying or harassment (including complaints relating to the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010)	Deputy Head (Pastoral): j.howorth@haileybury.com
The pastoral support of a Tutor or the arrangements in House	The Housemaster/Housemistress of your child's House, or Head of Lower School
The teaching in an academic department	The relevant Head of Department
The Head of an academic department or any other academic matter	The Deputy Head (Academic): m.tomkins@haileybury.com
Fees, premises, security, health and safety	The Chief Financial and Operations Officer: h.young@haileybury.com
Sport provision	The Director of Sport: a.searson@haileybury.com
Co-curricular Music provision	The Director of Music: r.brain@haileybury.com
Co-curricular Drama provision	The Director of Dramatic Arts: j.thomas@haileybury.com
The Directors of Sport/Music/Drama or any other issues relating to the School's co-curricular provision	The Deputy Head (Co-Curricular): a.head@haileybury.com

If the informal complaint is about the CFOO, Deputy Master or any Deputy Head, it should be referred to the Master. The Master will decide whether he can deal with the complaint informally or whether the complaint should be dealt with formally under the procedure below. If the informal complaint is about the Master, it should be referred to the Clerk to Governors, who will discuss the matter with the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will determine whether the complaint should be dealt with by him informally, or whether the formal procedure below should be followed.

A complaint about any individual Governor or the Council should be sent to the clerk to Governors, as above.

If your complaint is related to a safeguarding matter please refer to the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for further guidance (available on the [Policies page](#) of the School's website and on the Policies page of the [School Portal](#)).

7.2 Stage Two (Formal Complaint)

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, or if the complaint is so serious that an informal complaint is not appropriate, parents should write to either the Master or the Chief Financial and Operations Officer as appropriate and formalise the complaint. This should be done within one month of the concern arising, or within 15 working days of the outcome of the previous stage being communicated to you if relevant. The division of responsibility at Haileybury is as follows:

The Master	All matters to do with pupils' education including discipline, co-curricular and pastoral care.
The Chief Financial and	Financial matters, buildings, grounds and equipment, health and safety, and domestic issues.

Operations Officer	
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The Master and the CFOO consult regularly, particularly when their areas of responsibility overlap. To raise a formal complaint with the Master or the CFOO you should briefly set out in writing your concern together with details as to why you believe that any investigation and/or action taken at the previous stage was unsatisfactory (if relevant) a copy of any relevant documents and the desired outcome.

If you have a formal complaint about the CFOO, this should be referred to the Master. If you have a formal complaint about the Master, this should be referred to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to Governors².

The Master or the CFOO will respond within three working days to acknowledge receipt (in holiday and half term periods, within two weeks) indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales.

Investigation:

The subject matter of the complaint will be investigated in the most appropriate manner, which may include some or all of the following steps:

- a. delegation of the investigation to a senior member of staff or a third party;
- b. involvement of one or more of the Governors;
- c. request for additional information from the parent, including what they think might resolve the issue (if not already requested under Stage 1); and
- d. a request for a conversation and / or a meeting with the parent personally and / or others with relevant knowledge of the circumstances to define the scope of the complaint and / or assist in the investigation.

Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Where the investigation is conducted by someone else they will prepare a report on the investigation which will usually then be considered by the master. Personal data may be redacted and names anonymised or cyphered in line with data protection principles.

Decision:

Once the Master or CFOO is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the outcome will be communicated to parents in writing, usually within one month of the date of the complaint in term time, and within one month of the start of the next academic half term if it is a holiday period. The Master or CFOO will also communicate the rationale behind the decision and action. If for any reason it is not possible to respond within these timescales, the Master or CFOO will inform the parent(s) and provide a new timescale.

If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they can proceed to Stage Three of this procedure.

7.3 Stage Three (Formal complaint to a panel appointed by the Council)

If parents remain dissatisfied following Stage Two of this complaints procedure, they should proceed to the stage three process by writing to the Clerk to Governors, as above. The Clerk to Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within one week (in holiday and half term periods, within two weeks) and will inform the Chair of Governors that a Stage 3 complaint has been raised.

² Clerk to Governors+ 44 (0)1992 706212. clerktogovernors@haileybury.com

Complaints under this stage should be brought within 15 working days of the Stage Two decision being communicated. Any supporting evidence parents wish to rely on should be provided with their request for a Stage 3 Panel Hearing.

To the extent parents are unable to request a Stage 3 panel hearing within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances, a request should be made in writing to the Clerk to Governors in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be considered. In the event the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated (including to the extent applicable any extensions if agreed) the School reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.

The Chair of Governors will appoint three members as a panel to review the complaint. Panel members will have had no previous direct involvement in the matters detailed in the complaint. The Chair of Governors will appoint one member of the panel to act as Chair. One of the three panel members shall be independent of the management and the running of the School; in accordance with Department for Education guidelines this person will be someone who has held a position of responsibility and is used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments.

If the panel deems it necessary, it may request further information about the complaint or any related matter to be supplied in advance of the hearing. If possible, the panel will resolve the complaint without the need for further investigation. If further investigation is required, the panel will determine how this should be carried out.

A hearing will be convened to discuss the complaint as soon as reasonably practicable, taking account of term dates, staff availability, and the availability of panel members. The hearing arrangements will be reasonable in order to facilitate parents attending, and the hearing may therefore take place via video conference or other remote method if appropriate. The parent(s) will be entitled to attend the panel hearing and may be accompanied by one other person who may be a relative, a teacher or a friend, however, the hearing is not a legal hearing and neither party will be permitted to be accompanied by a legal representative.

The panel will decide whether or not it will be helpful for any witnesses to attend.

The Clerk to Governors is responsible for the arrangements for the hearing and will circulate relevant documents in reasonable time before the hearing to the panel and both parties.

The panel members may, where it is deemed appropriate, be provided with terms of reference by the Clerk to Governors, setting out their remit and the process to be followed. The remit of the panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors.

The format of the hearing shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and will usually be one of the following:

- All parties present together at the hearing at the same time; or
- Sequential - the parties will attend one after the other, so that a party is not present whilst the other makes their submission.

The panel will consult with the parties to determine the most appropriate option, with the objective of ensuring a fair hearing. Where a sequential format is used, each party will be provided with a summary of the other party's submission in order to allow an opportunity to respond, if necessary.

The panel will then withdraw to deliberate and will reach a consensus.

The panel may depart from the above process if it is considered reasonable in order to ensure a fair hearing.

A note-taker will attend the hearing to take a note. This will not be a verbatim note but an accurate reflection of what was discussed. Notes of the hearing will be shared with the attendees as soon as practicable after the hearing. To the extent there is any disagreement about the content of those notes or further comments from the parties, these will be considered by and, where possible, resolved by the Chair of the Panel. A copy of any comments on the notes will be appended to any note.

After due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage Two decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:

- dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
- make recommendations.

The panel hearing should proceed even if the parent decides not to attend but has not withdrawn the complaint. In such cases the panel should consider the parent's complaint in their absence and issue findings based on the information available. The panel should seek to accommodate parental availability for dates and consider parental comments concerning panel composition, but the Chair of Governors has the final say on the composition of the panel.

The Clerk to Governors will communicate the panel's final decision to the parent(s), the Chair of Governors and the Master, where possible within 15 working days of the hearing (in term time, and within 15 working days of the start of the next academic half term if it is a holiday period). Where the panel requires additional time to consider their decision, or to seek further information, the parent(s) will be updated and a new timescale communicated. The decision of the panel is final.

Where possible, within the bounds of confidentiality and privacy, a copy of the panel's decision and recommendations will be provided to the person complained about and the Stage 2 decision-maker. A copy of the findings will be placed on file and will be available for inspection by Council members and the Master.

8. Complaints about the Master

An informal complaint about the Master should be referred to the Clerk to Governors who will discuss the matter with the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will determine whether the complaint should be dealt with by him informally under the Stage 1 process, or whether the formal procedure above should be followed.

If you have a formal complaint about the Master, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors (via the Clerk to Governors) and include the same information referred to above. The Chair of Governors will determine whether to deal with the complaint himself or nominate someone to determine the complaint following the Stage Two procedure as if the references to the Master (or their nominee) are to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Master.

The Chair of Governors (via the Clerk to Governors) will acknowledge the complaint within three working days of receipt and indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale. Such action may include an investigation and / or a meeting with the parent. The parent will usually receive a response to the complaint within one month of the date of the complaint in term time, and within one month of the start of the next academic half term if it is a holiday period. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to the Stage 3 procedure.

9. External agencies

Where the School's internal procedures have been followed and a parent remains dissatisfied, the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) may be contacted. ISI inspects all aspects of independent school education and its contact information is as follows: telephone 020 7600 0100 or email concerns@isi.net.

If your complaint relates to the way a safeguarding or child protection matter you raised was handled and you are concerned that it may constitute a potential failure of our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, this complaint should be referred to the local safeguarding panel: Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP)

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/child-protection/hertfordshire-safeguarding-children-partnership/hscp.aspx>.

10. Persistent complaints

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

11. Complaint record keeping and the use of personal data

The School will keep a confidential, written register of all formal complaints, the stage at which they are resolved and any action taken as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether or not the complaint is upheld.

If a complaint is raised via telephone or in person regarding a school-related issue, the member of staff receiving the concern must follow the procedure set out under Stage One above. The Deputy Master maintains a record of these complaints and reviews them every half term to track trends and patterns. The Deputy Master reports on the number of informal complaints, trends and patterns to the Nominations and Governance Committee each term, and annually to Council.

The register of all formal complaints (i.e. Stages Two and Three) and the stage at which they are resolved is kept by the Clerk to Governors. All correspondence relating to formal complaints must be copied to the Clerk to Governors when received or sent. The Clerk to Governors keeps an electronic file of the correspondence and documents relating to each formal complaint, which includes a covering sheet containing summary information. The Master or relevant Council member will sign and date the cover sheet to evidence their review of the file. These records of formal complaints are available to the Council and the Master to inspect at any time.

Records of complaints will be retained for the periods set out in the School's Data Retention Policy.

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice on the School's website. When dealing with complaints, the School (including any panel member appointed under the Stage Three process) may process a range of information, which will include the following:

- date when the issue was raised;
- name of parent;
- name of pupil, year group and House;
- description of the issue;
- records of all the investigations (if appropriate);
- witness statements (if appropriate);
- name and contact details of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage;

- copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations);
- notes/minutes of the hearing;
- the panel's written decision and recommendations and any action taken by the School regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

The above may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Privacy Notice.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and complaints panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice.

The number of formal stage two and three complaints for the preceding academic year should be recorded on this policy.

Haileybury received two formal complaints from parents of current pupils during the academic year 2025-26.

12. Monitoring of complaints

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) should be kept aware by the Deputy Master and/or Master of trends in complaints at any stage.

The Chair of the Nominations and Governance Committee will review the Complaints Register and files prior to each meeting of the Nominations and Governance Committee and report to that Committee accordingly. Governors should check that information regarding Stage One complaints is being kept and considered by ELT and should be made aware of the trends within those Stage One complaints through the academic year. Governors should also be aware of any formal complaints (Stages Two and Three) and the detail of such complaints; this information should not prejudice any possible future hearings.

Version history		
Date	Reviewed by	Notes
March 2018	SLT	
January 2018	SLT	Reviewed
June 2019	SLT	Reviewed
June 2020	SLT	Reviewed
September 2020	SLT	Updated
November 2021	SLT	Policy updated (Complaints Record Keeping Policy incorporated into this policy)
September 2022	SLT	Minor updates
October 2023	SLT	Reviewed and updated
November 2023	Governors' Nominations and Governance Committee	Reviewed
September 2024	SLT	Minor updates
September 2024	Governors' Education and Safeguarding Committee	Reviewed
November 2024	Nominations and Governance Committee	Reviewed and updated.
August 2025	Clerk to Governors	Reviewed and updated.
August 2025	SLT	Reviewed and updated.
September 2025	Executive Leadership Team	Reviewed and approved
November 2025	Governors' Nominations and Governance Committee	Reviewed and updated.
July 2026	SLT/ Clerk to Governors	Reviewed and updated
August 2026	ELT	Reviewed and approved.