



# Haileybury Astana

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

### **Complaints Procedure for Current Pupils or Parents of Current Pupils**

This policy is made available to parents and pupils on the school website. A hard copy can also be requested from the Headmaster's PA. Haileybury is committed to a continuous programme of rigorous self-evaluation in order to make the best possible provision for the pupils entrusted to our care. Parental feedback therefore is much to be welcomed. Where the school's policies, or the implementation of them, are open to criticism parents must be able to express a formal complaint without fear or favor, provided only that it is addressed in a constructive tone and spirit. 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 parents and the various responsibility holders within the school.

### **What constitutes a complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalized for a complaint that you raise in good faith. What constitutes a parent of a current pupil? A parent of a current pupil is one whose child is a current registered pupil attending Haileybury Astana. Once a child has left Haileybury Astana the child is no longer a current pupil. A parent whose child has left Haileybury Astana may escalate a complaint that they have already registered informally or at any formal stage but cannot initiate a new complaint. This policy should not be used to appeal exclusions; there is an alternative procedure for this.

### **Advice to Pupils:**

If you feel worried about something or if you wish to complain about how you are, or have been treated, there are various options available: You may wish just to talk to someone OR you may wish to make an informal complaint OR you may wish to make a formal complaint. You may wish just to talk to someone. Remember you have close friends who may be able to help, or just an older boy or girl to whom you may feel you can comfortably talk. Your teachers and management are always ready to help. There may be times when you feel you can't talk with a member of staff - this is perfectly all right and natural. Talk, telephone or write to any of the following:

- Your parents
- The School Doctor
- email to Deputy Head (Whole School) or Head of Junior School

### **What happens if I want to make an informal complaint about something?**

Sometimes you may feel that you would like to make a complaint about something that is worrying you. This might be about how you are being treated. The first thing you should do is speak to any member of staff you can trust, such as your tutor or your Housemaster. You can take a friend with you if you wish - another pupil, an older pupil, or another member of

staff. It is particularly important for you to realize that in the event that you are in trouble over something, you can have your tutor or a friend with you when you are talking with your Housemaster, the Head of Senior School or Headmaster. If the matter can't be easily settled to your satisfaction, then you can make a formal complaint. Formal complaints procedure for current pupils to do this you will need to write to your Housemaster, the Head of Senior School or the Headmaster explaining that you wish to make a formal complaint. You will get a note in reply saying the complaint has been recorded and that it will be attended to. This reply will normally be acknowledged and discussed within three teaching days of its receipt in term time (in holiday and half term periods the response time will understandably be longer). You will then be asked to talk the matter through with either the Head of Senior School or the Headmaster; you can have a friend with you, who may be another pupil, your tutor or your Housemaster or any member of staff. If within two more days (assuming holidays/weekends do not fall within this time) you have not had the matter satisfactorily sorted out, you may contact any of the people listed above. You do not have to inform staff or anyone else that you are complaining about them. You will not be penalized in any way for making a complaint in good faith.

### **Complaints Procedure for parents of current pupils.**

Haileybury Astana operates a three-stage process for formal complaints:

#### **Stage One (Informal Complaint)**

Most complaints or concerns can usually be addressed informally, and entirely satisfactorily, through discussion with the appropriate member of staff. As Haileybury Astana operates on a House system and form tutor system the first ports of call for most issues related to your daughter or son's academic and social wellbeing should be their Housemistress/master or Form Teacher. For those in Junior School the first port of call should be the Head of Junior.

An informal complaint can be made in writing, via the telephone. If the complaint is made in writing, it will be acknowledged and discussed within three teaching days of its receipt in term time (in holiday and half term periods within 2 weeks). The responsibility holder should inform the Deputy Head (Whole School). The relevant person having duly considered the issue, and acted on it, at his or her discretion will then notify the parent in writing, normally within one month of receiving the complaint (in term time, and within one month of the start of the next academic half term if it is a holiday period), confirming that the matter has been investigated and explaining what action has been taken in the light of the concern.

If your complaint is to do with Headmaster, Bursar, Deputy Head or Head of Junior parents should go straight to Stage Two (Formal), this is below. If the parent remains dissatisfied with the response provided from the informal complaint the next step is to pursue a formal complaint at Stage Two (see below).

**Stage Two (Formal Complaint)** This has two paths depending on the complaint – (A and B):

**A.** If the parent remains dissatisfied following stage one of the process, he or she should next approach either the Headmaster or the Bursar as appropriate and formalize the complaint. The division of responsibility at Haileybury Astana is as follows:

The Headmaster on all matters to do with pupils' education including discipline and pastoral care.

The Bursar on financial matters, buildings, grounds and equipment, Health and Safety and domestic issues.

The Headmaster and the Bursar consult regularly particularly when their areas of responsibility overlap. A formal complaint to the Headmaster or the Bursar should

commence with the parent briefly setting out in writing the concern together with a statement as to why it is believed that the investigation and/or action taken at a lower level was unsatisfactory. The Headmaster or the Bursar will respond within three teaching days to acknowledge receipt (in holiday and half term periods within two weeks), then investigate the matter further and independently of 6 conclusions arrived at an earlier stage. The outcome of their investigation will be communicated to parents in writing usually within one month of the matter coming to their attention (in term time, and within one month of the start of the next academic half term if it is a holiday period). They will also communicate the rationale behind their decision and action. This communication may also involve a face to face meeting, but this will not be the case on every occasion.

**B.** If parents wish to make a complaint against the Headmaster or the Bursar then they should contact the Chair of Governors. If the complaint is against the Headmaster this can be facilitated by contacting the Bursar; if the complaint is against the Bursar, then this can be facilitated by contacting the Headmaster. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt within one week (in holiday and half term periods within two weeks) and then investigate the matter. The outcome of his or her investigation will be communicated to parents in writing usually within one month (in term time, and within one month of the start of the next academic half term if it is a holiday period) of the matter coming to his or her attention. He or she will also communicate the rationale behind their decision and action. This communication may also involve a face to face meeting, but this will not be the case on every occasion.

**Stage Three (Formal Complaint to Board of Governors)** If parents remain dissatisfied following stage two of this complaints procedure then they should bring their concern to the Governors of the school who will appoint a panel who have had no direct involvement in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of three panel members shall be independent of the management and the running of the school; this person will be someone who has held a position of responsibility and is used to scrutinizing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments. The panel hearing will allow for a parent to attend and be accompanied if they wish. The panel will make findings and recommendations. The panel hearing should proceed even if the parent may subsequently decide not to attend yet has not withdrawn the complaint. In this case the panel should consider the parent's complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on the substance of the parent's complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The panel should seek to accommodate parental availability for dates and consider parental comments concerning panel composition, but the Haileybury Astana Governors have the final say on the composition of the panel and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within one week (in holiday and half term periods within two weeks) and communicate the final decision of the investigation or panel hearing to the various parties, usually within one month of the matter being raised with panel (in term time, and within one month of the start of the next academic half term if it is a holiday period). Where possible within the bounds of confidentiality and privacy, a copy of the findings will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. A copy of the findings will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Headmaster.

**Recording of Complaints:** Following the resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a confidential, written record of all complaints and at which stage they may be resolved, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

- A summary of all stage one informal complaints should be sent to the Deputy Head (Whole School) using the email coversheet provided. A copy of this coversheet and all correspondence, statements and records relating to a stage one informal complaint must be filed securely within the relevant department/house or area by the member of staff responsible for dealing with the complaint. (See below for details of what to record).

The Head of Senior School maintains a spreadsheet record of these complaints to track trends.

- A record of all formal complaints (i.e. stages two and three), the manner in which they were handled and the stage at which they were resolved will be received and kept by the Headmaster. The coversheet provided must be used for all formal complaints. (See below for details of what to record)
- Correspondence, statements, and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential
- Date when the issue was raised; name of parent; name of pupil; year group and house of pupil.
- Description of the issue and the names of staff handling the issue at each stage of the process
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations) \*
- Recommendations and action taken by the school regardless of whether the complaint is upheld. \*
- Stage at which complaints are resolved\*; Decision or outcome\* The number of formal stage two and three complaints for the preceding academic year should be recorded.

### **Monitoring of complaints**

- The Senior Leadership Team should be kept aware by the Deputy Head (Whole School) and/or Headmaster of trends as regards all complaints at any stage, except for safeguarding complaints.
- The Chair of Governors will review the Complaints Record annually. He or she should check that information regarding stage 1 complaints is being kept and considered by SLT; and he or she should be made aware of the trends within those stage 1 complaints through the academic year. He or she should also be aware of any formal complaints (stages 2 and 3) and the detail of such complaints; this information should not prejudice any possible future hearings.

### **Confidentiality:**

Parents / guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and with appropriate confidentiality.

### **Advice to staff re complaint Handling**

The following comments are offered to staff both by way of advice when dealing with a complaint and to ensure that the relevant information is recorded on file. There is no ideal way in which to handle such situations, since all parents are individuals, as are all children. Effective complaint handling, however, can play a key role in improving our relations with the parent body.

There is a danger that complaints might be handled by the wrong person and information may not be recorded satisfactorily. What follows is directed towards improving our methods of dealing with complaints, whether formal or informal.

Underlying principles:

- Every complaint matters. A complaint that is well handled and that produces an outcome that is satisfactory to all parties will enhance the school's reputation.
- No school is perfect and so we should have the confidence to investigate complaints fairly in an open and self-critical way.

- Staff should take care not to criticize colleagues to parents until any investigation is complete, and even at this stage, the language used should be measured and professional.
- The speed of a response is critical to achieving a satisfactory outcome from the complainant's point of view; things should not be allowed to drag on.
- It is better to bring parties together face-to-face and avoid lengthy, time-consuming correspondence wherever possible. However, a written allegation requires a written response.
- Complaints should be dealt with by the teacher responsible for the criticized activity.
- In all correspondence pejorative language should be avoided. Calmness and fairness should be the keys.
- Individual complaints should be placed in a broader context. Is there a widely shared concern? The practicalities
- Although the policy allows for three teaching days all complaints should receive a response of some kind within one teaching day in term time, even if this is only a holding reply such as "I'll look into it" and an explanation of when you will be back in touch.
- We should aim to complete a full reply to a complaint within a week, even if the policy allows for one month at each stage. Where this is not possible the parents need to be informed, the reasons explained, and a timeline established.
- Where a meeting is arranged, younger or less experienced colleagues should be accompanied by their line manager.

### **Letters to parents**

- Should be on individualized headed notepaper.
- Should be measured in tone and should never criticize a parent for raising an issue, even where the complaint has proved unfounded. We should not adopt a defensive stance when faced with a complaint.
- Must be shown to the Head of Senior School before dispatch to reduce the possibility of errors or inappropriate tone.
- If a colleague is acknowledged to be at fault, then that colleague should also be shown the letter, or should be aware of what has been communicated to parents orally.