



HAILEYBURY ALMATY

COMPLAINTS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Haileybury Almaty upholds the British School Overseas (BSO) requirement to have a clear and formal procedure for the handling of any complaints that parents/guardians may have. Haileybury Almaty welcomes regular and open communication (formal and informal) between parents and staff at every level. Parental involvement is encouraged and access to the Headteacher and other staff is easily arranged. Although we pride ourselves on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care we provided to our pupils, we welcome opportunities to learn how we can improve the education and pastoral support we deliver. We understand that, from time to time, parents will have concerns they wish to express or complaints they wish to make. These are followed up as promptly as possible and, where possible and appropriate, without the need for any formal procedures.

This procedure is not intended to interfere with or inhibit the established and effective links that already exist. However, if parents/guardians do have a serious complaint they can expect it to be treated in accordance with the procedures below.

RECORD OF COMPLAINTS

The school keeps a written record of all formal complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing.

STAGE 1: INFORMAL RESOLUTION

It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally using the links that already exist between the School and parents, with the class teacher (for primary pupils) or class teacher/form tutor (for secondary pupils) being the usual first point of contact. The procedures below are not intended to provide some general guidance on how best to raise a concern or complaint.

- a. If parents have a concern or complaint they should normally contact their child's class teacher/form tutor in the first instance. In many cases, the matter can be resolved straight away. If the class teacher/form tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, they may consult the Head of Key Stage/Faculty, Head of School, Director of Studies, Deputy Headteacher or other senior member of staff depending upon the nature of the matter at issue.

If parents wish to make a complaint against the Headteacher or the Bursar then they should contact the Chair of the Board of Governors.

- b. Complaints or concerns raised directly with a Head of Key Stage/Faculty, Head of School, or other senior member of staff will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher/form tutor unless the senior member of staff deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- c. On some occasions parents may wish to deal directly with the Headteacher. If this is the case they should make an appointment or, if they prefer, communicate their concerns or

complaint formally in writing. In the case of a meeting it will be helpful for the discussion if, when making the appointment, an indication is given of the matter or matters they wish to raise. This will enable the Headteacher to make some preliminary inquiries.

d. The class teacher/form tutor (or other member of staff approached) must make a written record of any serious concerns or complaints and the date on which they were received. He/she will be required to place this record on file.

e. Should the class teacher/form tutor (or other member of staff) and parents 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. Should the parents have already made contact with the Headteacher, and still have failed to resolve the matter, they will be advised by the Headteacher to go direct to Stage 3.

f. Staff will be expected, as a matter of course, to keep the Headteacher updated on all serious complaints, even when the Headteacher's involvement is not necessary.

g. If the complaint or concern involves a member of the support staff - as distinct from academic staff – parents should consult the Bursar in the first instance. The Bursar will keep the Headteacher informed. If the Headteacher is unable to resolve the matter, the parents will be advised to proceed in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

h. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints is to be kept confidential.

5. It is essential that parents are made to feel that their complaint or concern is being treated seriously. Parents must be kept informed of developments, preferably in writing. Written records should be made as soon as possible, to ensure accuracy.

STAGE 2: FORMAL RESOLUTION

6. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing and then decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate action to take.

a. In most cases the Headteacher will meet with the parents concerned, normally within a week of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

b. It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigation.

c. The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint as soon as possible. If necessary a member of the administrative team may be invited to take notes during any such meetings.

d. Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, as far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of the decision in writing, with reasons for the decision. The Headteacher will usually be expected to reach a decision within a week of meeting with the parents, or, if a meeting is not required, within a week of acknowledging receipts of the complaint.

e. If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they may then proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

STAGE 3: PANEL HEARING

7. Calling the Complaints Panel

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the member of the governing body appointed by the Board of Governors to call hearings and act as Chair of the Complaints Panel. S/he will acknowledge their complaint in writing and offer them a meeting with another governor to see if an informal resolution may still be possible. If this offer is refused, or an informal resolution proves impossible, the matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will be held within ten (10) working days of the acknowledgement of the complaint by the Board of Governors, or within fifteen (15) working days if there is an attempt at an informal resolution.

8. Composition of the Complaints Panel

The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The panel must always comprise an uneven number of participants. The Panel will usually be chaired by the governor responsible for dealing with complaints, along with one or more other governors as may be appointed for the occasion, and one other person independent of the management and running of the School. The panel members will be appointed by the Board of Governors. A secretary shall be appointed to make a written record of the proceedings.

9. Functioning of the Complaints Panel

The Chair of the Panel will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, normally within the timings indicated above.

a. The Chair, consulting other Panel members as appropriate, will collate the written evidence to be considered by the Panel. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than three days prior to the hearing.

Note: If parents wish to make a complaint against the Headteacher or the Bursar, then they should contact the Chair of the Board of Governors. The Chair of the Board of Governors' contact details are provided on the school's website, www.haileyburyalmaty.kz. The Chair of the Board 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.

b. The complainant and all persons who may be affected by or criticised in the decision and any recommendations of the Panel shall be provided with a copy of that evidence, be invited to attend the hearing, or that part of the hearing that affects them, and/or submit observations in writing.

c. The parents and all other persons who might be affected by the deliberations and recommendations of the Panel, may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, staff member or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. In the event that parents choose to bring a legal representative, the School must be informed in advance.

d. The hearing will be conducted in the presence of the complainant and the other persons who may be affected.

e. At the outset the Chair of the Panel will introduce the panel and other persons in attendance, explain the purpose of the hearing and the procedure to be followed, and ensure that all parties are ready to proceed. In explaining the purpose of the hearing the Chair will briefly describe the nature of the complaint. In explaining the procedure to be followed, the Chair will outline the burden and standard of proof. In ensuring that all parties are ready to proceed the Chair must be satisfied that all relevant documents have been disclosed to the complainant and the persons affected, that they have been given an opportunity to attend, and that they have been given sufficient time to prepare for the hearing, produce evidence and obtain witnesses.

f. The procedure adopted by the Panel will be inquisitorial and under the direction of the Chair. This means that the Panel will inquire into the matters referred to it rather than simply judge between two competing parties. In the event of a dispute over facts, the burden of proof will be on the complainant, the standard of proof being on the balance of probabilities. (This is the test used by civil courts and employment tribunals when dealing with non-criminal cases in the UK.)

g. The proceedings will be conducted in a calm, polite and constructive manner. The Chair has the right to exclude persons who do not comply with this requirement.

h. Once the preliminaries are complete the complainant will normally first be asked to explain the complaint and the redress sought. The persons affected and the members of the Panel will have the right to ask questions of the complainant. The persons affected will then be given the opportunity to respond. The complainant and the members of the Panel will have the right to ask questions of the persons affected. Any such questioning will be under the control of the Chair.

i. At this stage the Panel should be able to establish whether there is any dispute as to the facts set out in the written evidence and whether it is necessary to call further witnesses or examine further written evidence to resolve such dispute or to explain or enlarge upon the oral or written evidence. If, in the opinion of the Panel, further oral or written evidence is required, the Panel will call and question witnesses to elicit the evidence necessary for the Panel to make its decision and any recommendations. The complainant and the persons affected shall have the right to ask further questions of these witnesses. The Chair, in consultation with the other members, will have the right to adjourn the hearing to a later date if it is considered necessary.

j. When all the evidence has been heard the complainant and the persons affected shall have the right to address the Panel, the complainant being last to speak.

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

10. Deliberations and Findings of the Complaints Panel

- a.** After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which process it shall complete within three working days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headteacher, the Governors and, where relevant, the person who is the subject of the complaint.
- b.** The Chair will announce to the complainant and other persons affected whether the Panel intends to deliberate immediately on its decision and recommendations, or defer its deliberations to a later time or date. In either case, the Panel members will meet in private to reach the Panel's decision and any recommendations, which shall be given in writing. The Panel will endeavour to reach a unanimous decision. In the event of a disagreement that cannot be resolved, the decision may be taken by majority vote. Unanimous and majority decisions will be indicated in the Panel's written determination.
- c.** In making findings of fact, the Panel will take account of all the evidence it considers relevant. It will disregard irrelevant information, including speculation and unsupported suspicion. It is not bound by the strict rules of evidence applicable in a court of law, but hearsay evidence will be given less weight than first-hand evidence.
- d.** If any case or circumstance arises in practice that is not covered in these procedures, the Panel shall take such action as it considers just.
- e.** The record of the proceedings will be retained and, if necessary, transcribed. The transcript will be made available to the complainant at his/her request.

PUBLICATION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.** A copy of any findings and recommendations made by the Panel will be given to the complainant, the Board of Governors, the Headteacher, and (where relevant) the person complained about.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- 12.** Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.