



Complaints and Appeals Policy

HBB-POL-12 | Academic Year 2026–27

Policy reference	HBB-POL-12
Version	2026–27 v1.0
Policy date	October 2026
Date of next review	August 2027
Policy owner	Headmaster
Policy lead	Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Reviewed by	Leadership Team (LT) and Education and Safeguarding Committee
Approved by	Board of Governors
Intended audience	Pupils, parents and staff
Location	Parent Portal and School website
Related policies	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (HBB-POL-01); Data Protection Policy (HBB-POL-09); Serious Disciplinary Cases Procedure; Whistleblowing Policy; Admissions Policy (HBB-POL-13)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy is available to parents and pupils on the School website. A copy can also be obtained from the COO. In this policy, "parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for the pupil the complaint relates to.
- 1.2 Haileybury Bhaluka prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care it provides. The School is also committed to a continuous programme of rigorous self-evaluation, to make the best possible provision for the pupils in its care, and so parental feedback is welcome. Where a pupil or parent has a concern, or is unhappy about something and wants the School to act, this will be treated seriously and with care in line with these procedures.
- 1.3 Many concerns are dealt with informally and satisfactorily. Nothing in this policy is intended to discourage the informal, free flow of information and comment between pupils, parents and staff. Where matters cannot be resolved informally, these procedures provide a formal process.

2. Complaints procedure for current pupils

- 2.1 We always encourage pupils to tell us about any worries or concerns. If you are concerned about something, or want to complain about how you are being or have been treated, you can:
 - talk to someone informally, at any time;
 - make an informal complaint; or
 - make a formal complaint, if the matter is serious.

What is a complaint?

- 2.2 A complaint is when you have a concern about any matter. It might be about the School as a whole, a particular department or an individual member of staff. A complaint usually arises if you believe the School has done something wrong, failed to do something it should have done, or acted unfairly. All concerns and complaints are treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for you, and you will not be penalised for a complaint raised in good faith.

Talking to someone

- 2.3 You may have close friends you feel comfortable talking to. Your HM is always ready to help, as is your Tutor or any member of staff you know. You can also visit the School Counsellor or the Medical Centre.
- 2.4 There may be times when you feel you cannot talk to a member of staff. This is perfectly all right and natural. The School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), **Dr Tajrin Samiha Azmi**, is very happy to discuss any concerns with you. You can also raise a concern through the Student Senate or the anonymous suggestions box in your House. You can read the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy on the School website.

Making an informal complaint

- 2.5 If something is worrying you and you want to complain about it, first speak to a member of staff you trust, such as your Tutor or HM. You can take someone with you if you wish: another pupil, an older pupil or another member of staff.
- 2.6 Whenever you discuss a concern in this way, you can have your Tutor or a friend with you when you speak to your HM or a senior member of staff.
- 2.7 If the matter cannot easily be resolved in this way, you can make a formal complaint.

Making a formal complaint

- 2.8 To make a formal complaint, write to your HM, the Deputy Head or the Headmaster, saying that you wish to make a formal complaint. You will receive a reply confirming that your complaint has been recorded and will be dealt with. Your complaint will normally be acknowledged and discussed within three teaching days of being received in term time (within two weeks in holidays and half terms). You will then be asked to talk the matter through with the Deputy Head or the Headmaster. You can have a friend, your Tutor, your HM or any member of staff with you.
- 2.9 You do not have to tell staff, or anyone else, that you are complaining about them. You will not be penalised in any way for making a complaint in good faith.

3. Complaints procedure for parents of current pupils**What is a complaint?**

- 3.1 A complaint is a concern about any matter, or any matter about which a parent is unhappy and wants the School to act. It may be about the School as a whole, a particular department or an individual member of staff, for example. A complaint usually arises if a parent believes the School has done something wrong, failed to do something it should have done, or acted unfairly.
- 3.2 Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints are treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for you and your child, and neither of you will be penalised for a complaint raised in good faith.

Who counts as a parent of a current pupil?

- 3.3 A parent of a current pupil is a parent whose child is registered at and attending Haileybury Bhaluka. This procedure does not cover admissions matters, and therefore does not apply to pupils who have not yet joined the School. Once a child has left, they are no longer a current pupil, so the procedure does not apply either. However, a parent whose child has left may escalate a complaint already registered informally or at any formal stage; they cannot start a new complaint. This policy must not be used to appeal against exclusions. A separate process

for that is set out in the School's Serious Disciplinary Cases Procedure, available on the School website.

- 3.4 Haileybury Bhaluka has a three-stage process for complaints.

4. Stage One: informal complaint

- 4.1 Most complaints and concerns can be resolved quickly and satisfactorily by discussion with the appropriate member of staff. Because Haileybury Bhaluka has a House system, parents with a complaint should usually contact their child's HM (Housemaster or Housemistress) first. In most cases the matter will be resolved quickly and easily. An informal complaint can be made to any member of staff.
- 4.2 An informal complaint can be made in writing, by telephone or in person. Depending on its nature, it may be referred to another member of staff (see the responsibility holders below). If so, parents are told which member of staff will deal with it. However the complaint is made, the relevant member of staff will acknowledge it within three teaching days of receiving it in term time (within two weeks in holidays and half terms).
- 4.3 The responsibility holder will tell their line manager on the Leadership Team (by email) when an informal complaint is received. Where the complaint was made verbally, they will include a note of what was discussed. The member of staff will try to resolve the complaint within five working days and will tell the parent(s) what action has been taken. If the complaint cannot be resolved within this time, the parent(s) will be told that they can take it to Stage Two.

Responsibility holders

If your complaint relates to:	Please contact:
Teaching, learning, academic progress or examinations	The relevant Head of Department, then the Deputy Head
Your child's HM, boarding, pastoral care, discipline, or bullying, harassment or discrimination (including on the grounds of a protected characteristic)	The Head of Boarding or the Headmaster
A safeguarding or child protection matter	The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Fees, finance, buildings, catering, transport, health and safety or other operational matters	The COO

- 4.4 Informal complaints about the COO or Deputy Head should be referred to the Headmaster, who will decide whether to deal with the complaint informally or under the formal procedure below. Informal complaints about the Headmaster should be referred to the COO, who will discuss the matter with the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will decide whether to deal with the complaint informally or whether the formal procedure should be followed.
- 4.5 If your complaint relates to a safeguarding matter, please see the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (available on the School website).
- 4.6 If you remain dissatisfied with the response to your informal complaint, the next step is a formal complaint under Stage Two.

5. Stage Two: formal complaint

- 5.1 If you remain dissatisfied after Stage One, or the complaint is so serious that an informal complaint is not appropriate, you should write to the Headmaster or the COO, as appropriate, to make a formal complaint. This should be done within one month of the concern arising, or of the outcome of the previous stage being communicated to you. Responsibilities at Haileybury Bhaluka are divided as follows:

Responsibility holder	Area
Headmaster	All matters relating to pupils' education, including discipline, co-curricular activities, boarding and pastoral care
COO	Financial matters, buildings, grounds and equipment, health and safety, and domestic issues

- 5.2 The Headmaster and COO consult regularly, particularly where their areas of responsibility overlap. To raise a formal complaint with either of them, set out your concern briefly in writing, with details of why you believe any investigation or action at the previous stage was unsatisfactory (if relevant). A formal complaint about the COO should be referred to the Headmaster.
- 5.3 The Headmaster or COO will acknowledge receipt within three teaching days (within two weeks in holidays and half terms). Where appropriate, they may arrange a meeting or discussion with you about your complaint, and in some cases the matter can be resolved in this way. Otherwise, they will investigate further, independently of any conclusions reached at an earlier stage. This may include talking to anyone involved. Once they are satisfied that, as far as practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and communicated to you in writing. This is usually within one month of the complaint in term time, or within one month of the start of the next half term if the complaint is made in the holidays. The Headmaster or COO will also explain the reasons for their decision and any action taken. If it is not possible to respond within these timescales, they will tell the parent(s) and give a new timescale.
- 5.4 If you are still not satisfied with the decision, you should proceed to Stage Three.

6. Stage Three: panel hearing

- 6.1 If parents remain dissatisfied after Stage Two, the next stage is to contact the Chair of Governors by writing to the COO. The COO will acknowledge receipt within one week (within two weeks in holidays and half terms) and inform the Chair of Governors that a complaint has been made.
- 6.2 Complaints at this stage should be made within one month of the concern arising, or of the outcome of Stage Two being communicated. Any supporting evidence should be provided with your grounds of complaint.
- 6.3 The Chair of Governors will appoint a panel of three members, none of whom has had any previous direct involvement in the matters raised in the complaint, and will appoint one of them as panel Chair. In line with good practice under the Independent School Standards (England), one of the three will be independent of the management and running of the School. This will be someone who has held a position of responsibility and is used to scrutinising evidence and weighing balanced arguments.
- 6.4 If the panel considers it necessary, it may ask for further information about the complaint or a related matter before the hearing, or ask for further investigation to be carried out.
- 6.5 A hearing will be held as soon as reasonably practicable, taking account of term dates and the availability of staff and panel members. Arrangements will be reasonable, to help parents attend, and the hearing may take place by video conference or another remote method where appropriate. The parent(s) may attend the hearing and may bring one other person, such as a relative, teacher or friend. The hearing is not a legal hearing, so parents may not be accompanied by a legal representative.
- 6.6 The panel will decide whether it would be helpful for any witnesses to attend.
- 6.7 The hearing will usually take the following format:
- The parent(s) and any companion attend first, make their representations, and may be asked questions by the panel.

- The parent(s) and any companion then leave, and representatives of the School (usually the Headmaster or COO as relevant, or in their absence a member of the Leadership Team) attend to make their submissions. They may also be asked questions by the panel.
 - The panel then withdraws to deliberate and reach a consensus.
- 6.8 The panel may depart from this process if it considers this reasonable to ensure a fair hearing.
- 6.9 If possible, the panel will resolve the complaint without further investigation. If further investigation is needed, the panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- 6.10 After considering the merits of the complaint and all the facts it considers relevant, the panel will make findings on whether the Stage Two decision was reasonable, and will decide whether to:
- dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and/or
 - make recommendations.
- 6.11 The hearing should go ahead even if the parent decides not to attend but has not withdrawn the complaint. In that case the panel will consider the complaint in the parent's absence and issue findings based on the information available. The panel should try to accommodate parents' availability and consider their comments on the panel's composition, but the Chair of Governors has the final say on who sits on the panel.
- 6.12 Where appropriate, the COO may give panel members terms of reference setting out their remit and the process to be followed. The remit of the panel is at the discretion of the Chair of Governors.
- 6.13 The COO will send the panel's final decision to the parent(s), the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster, where possible within two weeks of the hearing in term time (or within two weeks of the start of the next half term if the hearing is in the holidays). If the panel needs more time to reach its decision or to seek further information, the parent(s) will be updated and given a new timescale. The decision of the panel is final.
- 6.14 Where possible, within the limits of confidentiality and privacy, a copy of the panel's decision will be given to the person complained about. A copy of the findings will be kept on file and made available for inspection on the School premises by Governors and the Headmaster.

7. Complaints about the Headmaster

- 7.1 As above, an informal complaint about the Headmaster should be referred to the COO, who will discuss it with the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will decide whether to deal with the complaint informally or whether the formal procedure should be followed.
- 7.2 A formal complaint about the Headmaster should be made to the Chair of Governors (via the COO). The Chair of Governors will decide whether to deal with it personally, following the Stage Two procedure, or to refer it directly to a Stage Three panel.

8. Safeguarding and child protection

- 8.1 If your complaint is about how a safeguarding or child protection matter you raised was handled, and you are concerned that this may be a failure of our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, refer it to the Headmaster in the first instance. If it concerns the Headmaster, refer it to the Chair of Governors via the COO, or to the Safeguarding Governor.

9. Persistent complaints

- 9.1 Where a parent repeatedly raises the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

10. Record keeping

- 10.1 The School keeps a confidential written register of all formal complaints, the stage at which they were resolved, and any action taken as a result, whether or not the complaint was upheld.

- 10.2 If a complaint about a school matter is raised by telephone or in person, the member of staff receiving it must follow the Stage One procedure. The Deputy Head keeps a record of these complaints and reviews it every half term to track trends and patterns. The Deputy Head reports the number of informal complaints, and any trends and patterns, to the Education and Safeguarding Committee each term, and to the Board of Governors annually.
- 10.3 The register of all formal complaints (Stages Two and Three), and the stage at which each was resolved, is kept by the COO. All correspondence about formal complaints must be copied to the COO when it is received or sent. The COO keeps a file of the correspondence and documents for each formal complaint, with a cover sheet summarising it. The Headmaster may inspect these records at any time, and signs and dates the cover sheet to record each review.
- 10.4 Complaint records are kept for the periods set out in the School's Data Retention Policy.
- 10.5 The School processes data in line with its Privacy Notice, published on the School website. When dealing with complaints, the School (including any Stage Three panel member) may process a range of information, including:
- the date the issue was raised;
 - the parent's name;
 - the pupil's name, year group and House;
 - a description of the issue;
 - records of any investigations;
 - witness statements (if appropriate);
 - the names and contact details of the staff handling the issue at each stage;
 - copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of telephone conversations);
 - notes or minutes of the hearing;
 - the panel's written decision and recommendations, and any action taken by the School, whether or not the complaint is upheld.
- 10.6 This may include special category personal data (as explained in the School's Privacy Notice), such as information about physical or mental health, where the nature of the complaint makes this necessary. Such data will be processed in line with the Privacy Notice and the Data Protection Policy.
- 10.7 The School keeps records of formal complaints and panel hearings, in line with its Privacy Notice.
- 10.8 In the academic year 2025–26, the School received [number] formal complaints at Stage Two and [number] at Stage Three. This figure is updated each year.

11. Monitoring of complaints

- 11.1 The Deputy Head and/or the Headmaster keep the Leadership Team aware of trends in complaints at all stages.

12. Review record

Summary of changes (October 2026 review)

Area	Change made
Dates	Policy date October 2026 (the previous version was overdue for review, August 2024); next review August 2027. "HB 2024" removed from the title.
Roles	"Mr Chris Hill, Deputy Head (Pastoral) and DSL" replaced with the current Designated Safeguarding Lead, Dr Tajrin Samiha Azmi. "The Master" corrected to Headmaster. "Council" changed to Board of Governors.

Area	Change made
Responsibility holders	The table, which had only one row, now covers academic, pastoral and boarding, safeguarding, and finance and operations complaints.
UK references	"UK DoE guidelines" changed to good practice under the Independent School Standards (England). Haileybury UK website links replaced with the School website. The Equality Act reference now reads "discrimination or protected characteristics".
Co-education	"Their son's Housemaster" changed to "their child's HM".
Committee	Reports go to the Education and Safeguarding Committee.
Complaints data	Added a line for the number of formal complaints in the previous year (to be completed by the COO).
Numbering	Paragraph numbering, which restarted part-way through the previous version, corrected.

Version history

Date	Version	Reviewed by	Notes
September 2023	2023-24	COO	Original Complaints and Appeals Policy (HB 2024)
October 2026	2026–27 v1.0	Headmaster (SOG)	Full review: dates, statutory references, roles and consistent Haileybury Bhaluka policy format

Approved by the Board of Governors	
Signed (Chair of Governors)	
Date	