



SHERBORNE GIRLS

Complaints Procedure for Parents of Current Pupils

Approving body: Governance & Nominations Committee

Owner: Head

Author: Head

Executive Summary

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. This policy applies to complaints regarding current pupils. The School takes such matters very seriously and aims to resolve them as they arise. The School operates a three stage process and the procedures for each stage are detailed within this policy. This policy is intended to aid the resolution of complaints through an internal system. If, however, the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome they may contact the [Independent Schools Inspectorate](#) (ISI).



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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 prioritises the wellbeing of its pupils and they will not be penalised for a complaint raised 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 Sherborne Girls during the academic year 1 September to 31 August. Once a pupil has left Sherborne Girls she is no longer a current pupil of the School.

Unless clearly stated within any withdrawal process for those who leave the School at other times, for the purpose of this policy a pupil is no longer considered a current pupil at Sherborne Girls:

- after 31 December, for a pupil who leaves during the Michaelmas Term
- after 31 March, for a pupil who leaves during the Lent Term
- after 31 August, for a pupil who leaves during the Trinity Term.

A parent whose daughter has left Sherborne Girls 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 process for this.

Sherborne Girls operates a three-stage process for 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. An informal complaint can initially be made in writing, via the telephone or in person.

As Sherborne Girls operates on a House system the first port of call for most issues related to the pupil's academic and social wellbeing should be their Housemistress or Housemaster (HM). Depending on the nature of the complaint, the HM may suggest that another member of School staff might be better placed to deal with it (see below for examples of other responsibility holders). If this is the case, the HM will convey this within their initial response. Whether the informal complaint is made in writing, in person or via the telephone, the relevant responsibility holder will acknowledge the complaint within three teaching days of its receipt in term time (in holiday and half term periods, within two weeks).

The responsibility holder will inform the relevant Deputy Head who line manages them, on receipt of an informal complaint. Where the complaint is made verbally, the relevant member of staff will provide a note of the contents of any discussions. The responsibility holder having duly considered the issue, and acted on it, will discuss the result of their investigation with the relevant Deputy Head. At their discretion, the responsibility holder 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 light of the complaint.

Responsibility Holders:

If your complaint is related to:

The pupil's Housemaster/Housemistress

The School's disciplinary arrangements or the pastoral support of the School

The pastoral support of a tutor or the arrangements in house

The teaching in an academic department

The Head of an Academic Department or the School's Academic Policy

Sport Provision

Music Provision

Drama Provision

Please contact:

Senior Deputy Head

SeniorDeputySG@sherborne.com

Housemaster/Housemistress of your child's house

Relevant Head of Department

Deputy Head Academic

deputyacademic@sherborne.com

Director of Sport

e.turner@sherborne.com

Director of Music

m.cracknell@sherborne.com

Director of Drama

k.scott@sherborne.com

If your complaint is related to:

The Directors of co-curricular Sport/ Music/ Drama or any issues relating to the School's co-curricular provision

A Deputy Head or any other member of SLT

Head

Financial matters

Buildings, Grounds and Equipment

Health & Safety

Please contact:

Deputy Head (Co-Curricular & Operations)
DeputyOperations@sherborne.com

Head
head@sherborne.com

Chair of Governors
(via the Clerk to the Governors¹)
clerk@sherborneschools.group

Assistant Director of Finance
c.barnett@sherborne.com

Facilities Manager
r.nutland@sherborne.com

Health & Safety Manager
j.tuck@sherborne.com

If the parent remains dissatisfied with the response provided to the informal complaint the next step is to pursue a formal complaint under Stage Two (see below).

Stage Two (Formal Complaint)

If the parent remains dissatisfied following Stage One of the process, they should next approach either the Head or the Operations Bursar as appropriate and formalise the complaint. The School would expect a parent to make this approach within two working weeks of receiving communication concluding the informal stage ([see above](#)).

A formal complaint to the Head or the Operations 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 the previous stage was unsatisfactory. The Head and the Operations Bursar consult regularly, particularly when their areas of responsibility overlap. The division of responsibility at Sherborne Girls is as follows:

Head	all matters to do with pupils' education including discipline, co-curricular and pastoral care. head@sherborne.com
Operations Bursar	financial matters, buildings, grounds and equipment, Health and Safety and domestic issues. k.cook@sherborne.com

The Head or the Operations Bursar will respond within three teaching days to acknowledge receipt (in holiday and half term periods within two weeks). The Head or Operations Bursar may delegate responsibility for a further investigation into the matter to be conducted by a senior member of staff, independently of conclusions arrived at during the Informal stage. The

¹ The Clerk to the Governors is the COO of the Sherborne Schools Group.

outcome of a Stage Two investigation will be communicated to parents in writing by the Head or Operations Bursar 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.

Stage Three (Formal complaint to a panel appointed by the Board of Governors)

If the parent(s) remain dissatisfied following Stage Two of this complaints procedure they should bring their concern to the attention of the Board of the Governing Body (the Board). The School would expect this to be done within two weeks of receiving communication concluding the Stage Two Complaint. Access to the Board is through the Clerk to Governors (clerk@sherborneschools.group). The Clerk to the Governors will inform the Chair of Governors that a complaint has been raised. The Clerk to the Governors 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.

The Governors will ordinarily appoint three members as a panel to review and resolve the complaint. Panel members appointed would have had no direct involvement in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of the three panel members shall be independent of the management and the running of the School and the Sherborne Schools Group; as per DfE guidelines this person will be someone who has held a position of responsibility and is used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments. The panel hearing will allow for the complainant / the parents to attend part or all of the hearing, and be accompanied if they wish. The panel will make findings and recommendations.

The panel hearing should proceed even if the parent(s) may subsequently decide not to attend yet has not withdrawn the complaint. In this case the panel should consider the parent's complaint in their absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The panel should seek to accommodate parental availability for dates and consider their comments concerning panel composition, but the Sherborne Schools Group Board of Governors has the final say on the composition of the panel and the date of the hearing, which would normally be within one month of the start date of the Stage Three Complaint. The final decision will be communicated in writing to the parent, usually within 10 days of the completion of the hearing.

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 Head.

External Agencies

Where the School's internal procedures have been followed and a parent remains dissatisfied, the 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 (Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership) via 01305 228 866.

You may also wish to contact the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or email help@NSPCC.org.uk.

Complaint Record Keeping

The School will keep a confidential, written record of all complaints, the stage at which they are resolved and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Teaching staff should be aware of the School's Policy on Complaint Record Keeping and note that if a complaint is raised via telephone / in person regarding a School-related issue, the member of staff receiving the concern must follow the procedure set out under Stage 1 above. A record of all formal complaints (i.e. Stages 2 and 3) and the stage at which they are resolved will be kept by the Bursary. All correspondence must be copied to the Clerk to the Governors when received or sent, at the email address above. Records of formal complaints are available to the Council at any stage.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be held with these records but kept confidential except to the extent required under paragraph 33(k) of Part 7, Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

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

Sherborne Girls received no formal complaint from parents of current pupils during the academic year 2024 -2025.

Supporting documents

This policy has been written with consideration of the following School documents:

- Complaints Procedure for Current Pupils
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

To request a copy of any of the documents listed above please contact the Policies, Inspection and Strategy Coordinator: g.shavesmythies@sherborne.com

Appendix 1: Summary of Changes

- Contact details and number of formal complaints updated.