

Approving Body: Governance & Nominations Committee Date of Review: Michaelmas 2024 Date of Approval: 2 October 2024 (SLT)	Issue Number: 4 Review Due: Michaelmas 2025
<h1>Complaints Procedure for Parents of Current Pupils</h1>	
Owner: Head	Author: Head

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Required by ISI <input type="checkbox"/> ISI requires publication on website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal decision to publish on website <input type="checkbox"/> Required reading for all staff

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).

Supporting documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with 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

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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

Please contact:

Senior Deputy Head
SeniorDeputySG@sherborne.com

The pastoral support of a tutor or the arrangements in house

Housemaster/Housemistress of your child's house

The teaching in an academic department

Relevant Head of Department

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

Deputy Head Academic
deputyacademic@sherborne.com

Sport Provision

Director of Sport
h.parkin@sherborne.com

Music Provision

Director of Music
m.cracknell@sherborne.com

Drama Provision

Director of Drama
k.scott@sherborne.com

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

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

A Deputy Head or any other member of SLT

Head
head@sherborne.com

Head

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

¹ The Clerk to the Governors is the COO of the Sherborne Schools Group, Mr David Cole.

If your complaint is related to:

Please contact:

Financial matters

Deputy Director of Finance
c.barnett@sherborne.com

Buildings, Grounds and Equipment

Facilities Manager
r.nutland@sherborne.com

Health & Safety

Director of Risk Management
Stephen.TaylorDavies@sherborneschools.group

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 (k.cook@sherborne.com) 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.
Operations Bursar	financial matters, buildings, grounds and equipment, Health and Safety and domestic issues.

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 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 Council)

If the parent(s) remain dissatisfied following Stage Two of this complaints procedure they should bring their concern to the attention of the Council of the Governing Body. The School would expect

this to be done within two weeks of receiving communication concluding the Stage Two Complaint. Access to the Council is through the Clerk to Governors (David.Cole@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 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(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 Council 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 2023 -2024.

Appendix 1 – Summary of changes in Issue 4

- Job titles and governance detail updated following the merger with SSG.
- Specific responsibility holders for supporting functions added for reference to Stage One.
- Point of contact for Stage Two complaints regarding support functions changed from Bursar to Operations Bursar in line with change of staffing structure.
- Point of contact for Stage Three complaints changed from Head's PA to Clerk to Governors.
- Small stylistic improvements and reordering for greater clarity.