



CLAYESMORE

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Responsibility: The Head
Date reviewed: 8th March 2024
Review period: Annual
Reviewed by: SLT
Approved by: SSEC/PSEC
External release: Yes (Parents and public)

INTRODUCTION

This policy is for parents of pupils who wish to make a complaint about any aspect of the school's provision. It is applicable throughout both the senior and prep schools.

The school does not seek to distinguish between "concerns" and "complaints". Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school will be regarded as a complaint, and falls within the scope of this policy.

Exceptions

1. There is a separate policy related to exclusions which contains its own appeals process. The Exclusions Policy is available via the school website.
2. This complaints procedure does not apply to past pupils unless the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered.

This policy sets out a three stage process, which is outlined below.

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS

Number of Stage 2 complaints in the academic year 2023

- Clayesmore Senior School - 0
- Clayesmore Prep School - 1

COMPLAINTS PROCESS

STAGE 1: INFORMAL RESOLUTION

It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact the Houseparent or a member of the Senior Leadership Team – see below.

It is best if these concerns are raised via email so that an audit trail is created from the start.

If the complaint is made by telephone or orally, the member of staff receiving the complaint should record the parent's concerns in an email and forward it to the appropriate Houseparent or senior leader.

Parents, too, are welcome to contact any of the staff listed below to raise a concern or initiate a complaint.

- Houseparents/anything related to life in the boarding house: boarding@clayesmore.com
- Anything related to Learning Support: learningsupport@clayesmore.com
- Any aspect of student welfare, discipline and pastoral care: pastoraldeputy@clayesmore.com
- Anything related to academic work or exams: academicdeputy@clayesmore.com
- Any other aspect of the school's provision, or any aspect of the school's response to a complaint: seniordeputy@clayesmore.com
- Anything relating to the Prep School: seniordeputy@clayesmore.com
- For complaints about the Head: Chair of Governors, % the Clerk to the Governors, dfo@clayesmore.com

You may complain to the Head at any time and she will direct the appropriate person to deal with it in the initial stages.

Complaints made about the competence or behaviour of a member of staff will always be shared at the earliest stage with the Head.

Complaints about the Head should be sent to the Chair of Governors, % the Clerk to the Governors, Clayesmore School, Iwerne Minster, Blandford, DT11 8LL (dfo@clayesmore.com).

RESPONSE TIMES

The parent's email will be acknowledged within two working days (in term time) and a response to the complaint sent within seven working days (term time) or 14 days (in the holidays). If time is needed for an investigation to take place or enquiries to be made this will be explained. If there are circumstances where the timeframes stated cannot be adhered to (eg school holiday, key staff absence) the school will make contact to provide updated timescales.

Should the matter not be resolved satisfactorily a parent should proceed to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure.

STAGE 2: FORMAL RESOLUTION

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should email the Head with their original complaint and explain they are not happy with the resolution.

- a. The Head will normally contact the parents within one week in term time and within two weeks during holiday periods to discuss the complaint.
- b. It may be necessary for the Head to ask another senior member of staff to carry out a further investigation. Normally within two weeks of the discussion (in point a. above) the Head will write to parents detailing the school's response to the complaint. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- c. For complaints about the Head, the Chair of Governors will investigate the complaint or nominate an appropriate member of Council to investigate the complaint. The Chair (or nominated governor) will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents; they may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair (or nominated governor) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing, with reasons for this decision.
- d. If parents are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

STAGE 3: PANEL HEARING

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should email the Head to say they would like to request a panel hearing to review their complaint and/or the way it has been handled. This should happen within 14 working days. If the complaint is against the Head, parents should contact the Chair of Governors directly, as outlined above.

During term-time this email or letter will be forwarded within two working days to the Chair of Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. (If the complaint is about the Head, the Chair will refer to the Vice Chair or another governor who has not been involved in the investigation already, and they will call a panel. The Chair will not be involved if s/he has previously been involved in the investigation at Stage 2.)

Within seven working days of receiving the complaint, the Chair of Governors will convene a panel consisting of at least three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the leadership and running of the school.

The school will make all reasonable effort to deal with complaints received in the holidays in a timely way. Parents will be informed as soon as possible of the time-frame of responses to complaints made during the holiday.

The Chair of Governors shall appoint each of the panel members and one of them to be its chair.

The Chair of the panel will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 21 working days.

In the selection of the independent member of the panel, the DfE advises that “Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered.”

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 4 working days prior to the hearing.

One other person may accompany the parents to the hearing. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent’s complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The decision of the panel will be sent to parents within 14 working days of the hearing.

DECISION

The decision of the Panel is final. The Chair of the Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel’s findings and, if any, recommendations for changes or reviews of the school’s systems or practice will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under relevant legislation requests access to them, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

COMPLAINTS RECORD

The Head will keep a record of the outcome of all complaints that reach the formal stage of the process (Stage 2) indicating:

- (a) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
- (b) the findings, recommendations and actions taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).
- (c) a copy of these findings and recommendations is available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Head.

At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of the member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage.

Details of all informally raised concerns and complaints will be kept and analysed termly in an SLT review meeting to enable patterns of concern to be monitored.

AVAILABILITY OF THE POLICY

The Complaints Policy is available on the parent portal, and on request a copy can be emailed or sent in hard copy to any parent.