



FARNBOROUGH HILL
WHOLEHEARTEDLY

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Our Mission

Farnborough Hill welcomes all into our community, where we aim to live Christ's Gospel values joyfully and wholeheartedly, forming each individual to fulfil her potential and face the future with wisdom, strength and dignity.

Introduction

Farnborough Hill ('the School') aims to work collaboratively with parents and guardians. However, it is recognised that issues may arise which are not resolved to the satisfaction of parents and that they may wish to raise a formal complaint. All complaints will be treated in accordance with the three-stage procedure outlined herein, except for data handling complaints, which will be handled by the school's Privacy and Compliance Officer, as further described below

Legal Framework

The policy has been approved by the Governing Body of the School, and it takes account of the *Education (Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2026, part 7)*. Separate procedures apply in the event of a safeguarding or child protection issue (see *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*) or if the Headmistress excludes a pupil or asks her to leave and the parents seek a Governors' Review of that decision (see *Exclusions Policy*). A copy of the *Complaints Policy* is available on the website or upon request from the School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- Privacy Notice

Definition

A complaint is a matter in which a parent or guardian of a pupil is unhappy about a real or perceived problem and seeks action by the School. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. Any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School falls within the scope of this procedure.

A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done, or has acted unfairly.

Parents or guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

The 'days' specified in this policy refer to those days that the School is in session, i.e.: working days during 'term time'. Complaints will be acknowledged within five days if received during term time and as soon as is reasonably practicable during holiday periods. The target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days excluding times of lockdown or closure due to COVID-19; and in all cases as soon as reasonably practicable.

Process

This policy describes a three-stage procedure

- Stage 1 Informal Resolution
- Stage 2 Formal Resolution
- Stage 3 Panel Hearing

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents or guardians have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Head of Year in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved quickly, by this means.

If the HoY cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Informal complaints made directly to the Headmistress or other members of Senior Leadership Team will usually be referred to the relevant HoY, unless it is deemed it more appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

Complaints made directly to the Senior Leadership Team will usually be referred to the Headmistress if they cannot be resolved satisfactorily.

The member of staff dealing with the informal complaint stage will make a written record of the relevant complaint, the date on which it was received, of subsequent discussions with the complainant and of any resolution agreed. Should the matter not be satisfactorily resolved within seven days, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, the parents or guardians should put their complaint in writing to the Headmistress. The Headmistress will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- A complaints form may be used, if wished, and is provided as Appendix 1 at the end of this Policy.
- In most cases, the Headmistress will meet with the parents concerned, within seven days of receiving the formal written complaint, to discuss the matter. Where possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headmistress to carry out further investigations, in which case a definitive answer will be given within 10 further days.
- The Headmistress will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the Headmistress is satisfied that, so far as is reasonably practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, she will make a decision, and the parents or guardians will be informed in writing. The Headmistress will give reasons for her decision and indicate what, if any, action the school will take.
- If the complaint is against the Headmistress, the Chair of Governors, or his or her nominee, will call for a full report from the Headmistress and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors, or his or her nominee, 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 of Governors, or his or her nominee, is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the Chair of Governor's decision in writing within ten days. The Chair of Governors will give reasons for the decision.

- The Chair of Governors or his or her nominee will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- If parents or guardians are still not satisfied with the resolution, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure, which they must do within seven days of being informed of the Stage 2 outcome.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents or guardians seek to invoke Stage 3, following a failure to reach a satisfactory earlier resolution, they should contact the Clerk to the Governors.
- Parents or guardians should ensure that a copy of all relevant documents and full contact details accompany their letter to the Clerk to the Governors. Parents or guardians are asked to set out the grounds of their appeal and the specific outcome desired. The Clerk to the Governors will promptly acknowledge receipt and will liaise with the parents to arrange a hearing of the Complaints Panel.
- The Clerk to the Governors will call a hearing of the Complaint Panel as soon as reasonably practicable, with the target being within 10 days of receipt of the letter invoking stage 3; and the Chair of Governors will select the members of that panel. The Complaint Panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom must be independent of the governance, management or running of the School.
- The parents or guardians may be accompanied to the Complaints Panel hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not permitted.
- The Headmistress shall also be entitled to attend the hearing and to be accompanied by one other person, if she wishes.
- If the parent or guardian does not exercise the right to attend the panel hearing, this does not remove the School's obligation to hold the hearing in conformity with this Complaints Policy. The School's arrangements for the panel hearing should be reasonable in order to facilitate attendance of the parents or guardians.
- If the Complaints 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 four days prior to the hearing.
- The Chair of the Complaints Panel will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding. The Complaints Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.
- If possible, the Complaints Panel will resolve the parents' or guardians' complaint immediately, without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Complaints Panel will decide how it should proceed.
- After due consideration of all facts considered relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision within 5 days of the hearing whether to:
 - dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
 - uphold the complaint in whole or in part; and
 - make recommendations

- The decision of the Complaints Panel will be final and its findings, actions and recommendations will be sent promptly in writing to the complainant, the Headmistress and, where relevant, the person regarding whom the complaint was made.
- A copy of any complaint and findings/recommendations will be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headmistress, and also made available to Inspectors, on request. These documents are stored securely in the Clerk's office.

Data handling complaints

If the complaint relates to the way in which the School handles personal data, the complainant's concerns will be addressed in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018), which came into force on 19 June 2026. This applies to any data subject whose personal data we process and includes:

- pupils
- parents/guardians
- staff
- third parties

Data handling complaints may relate to:

- inaccurate or outdated personal data
- unlawful data sharing
- failure to respond to a Subject Access Request (SAR) or concern about full compliance with a SAR
- excessive data retention
- inappropriate use of profiling or artificial intelligence
- any breach of data protection rights

A complaint regarding the School's handling of personal data will be addressed by the School's Privacy and Compliance Officer: Mr Crispin Ingham.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may escalate the matter to The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO): <https://ico.org.uk>

Complaints Register

- All complaints which have reached Stages 2 or 3 are recorded in the Complaints Register. The register records the outcome of the individual complaint and any actions taken as a result, regardless of whether they are upheld, and the Stage at which the complaint was concluded, whether at Stage 2 (Formal Resolution) or Stage 3 (Panel Hearing), in accordance with the Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2019.
- Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, in accordance with its Data Protection Policy. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential; the exceptions to confidentiality are the Secretary of State and an inspection body under section 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act; where disclosure is required in for the School's inspections or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- When dealing with complaints, the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process), may process a range of information, in accordance with its Privacy Notice, which is likely to include:
 - date when the issue was raised
 - name of parent or guardian
 - name of pupil
 - description of the issue
 - records of all the investigations (if appropriate)

- witness statements (if appropriate)
- name of member of staff handling the issue at each stage
- copies of all correspondence on the issue
- notes of the hearing
- the Panel's written decision

The School will provide OFSTED and ISI, on request, with a written record of any complaints made during a specified period and the action that was taken as a result. Records of complaints will be retained for seven years after findings have been made. If a complaint is regarding a Safeguarding issue the documentation will be held for 10 years.

Repeat or Vexatious Complaints

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, the School will not investigate beyond the first instance.

Duty of Care

As an employer, the School has a duty of care towards its employees and will, therefore, seek to ensure that any employee who is the subject of a complaint will be treated fairly and with respect, and given appropriate opportunity to explain their viewpoint.

Number of Complaints

Information regarding the number of formal complaints received in the previous academic year is available by contacting the Headmistress's PA, via the contact details on the School website.

Referring a complaint to ISI

The School is inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), an independent organization which reports to the Government on schools. Parents or others who wish to complain about an independent school should contact the Department for Education using the form available on the ISI website. ISI will usually expect parents to have followed the School's formal complaints procedure, as outlined in this policy, before contacting them.

Policy Review

The Headmistress will report to the Governing Body annually on the number and type of complaints received, and their outcomes.

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headmistress and Governors. The next review is due in September 2026.

Appendix I – Complaint Form



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Complaint Form

Please read the School's Complaints Policy before completing this form. It provides information on when and how this form should be completed.

To be completed by those with **parental responsibility**¹ for a current pupil and returned to the Headmistress via HMSec@farnborough-hill.org or, if the complaint is against the Headmistress, The Chair of Governors via bursar@farnborough-hill.org.

PLEASE USE **BLOCK CAPITALS**

Your name(s)	
Name of pupil(s), year(s) and your relationship to them	
Contact address	
Contact telephone day	
Contact telephone mobile	
Contact email address	
Details of the complaint ²	

¹ Parental responsibility is defined in the Children Act 1989 as "*all rights, duties, powers and responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his or her property*". It equates to legal responsibility for the child. If you have any doubts about whether you do or do not have parental responsibility for the child you may wish to seek legal advice.

² Please provide details of the nature of your complaint. If you have more than one ground of complaint we suggest numbering them so that each is considered in turn. If you require more space you may wish to attach an additional page setting out your complaint.

Action taken to date (including staff member(s) who has/have dealt with it so far) and solutions offered
The reason(s) that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you
What action(s) would you like to be taken to resolve your complaint?
Signature(s):
Date:
School use
Stage in the complaints procedure (circle as appropriate): 1 2 3
Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom:
Complaint referred to:
Action taken:
Date:

How we may use personal information

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice available on our website. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel members appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include:

- This completed complaint form
- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent(s) and pupil(s)
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations
- Pupil records (as appropriate)

- Witness statements (as appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/ minutes of meetings including the Panel hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision.

As part of the complaints process we may also process 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Privacy Notice.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice.