Gig Mill Primary School

General Complaints Procedure

Autumn 2019

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Note: Throughout the document the term governing board is used, this term includes governing boards, governing bodies or, where appropriate, management committees.

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide a robust process for dealing with complaints relating to the school or its employees, including the provision of facilities or services.

This procedure also includes a provision for dealing with vexatious, malicious or repetitive unfounded complaints.

2.0 Scope

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Gig Mill Primary School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions, see Appendix 5 for a full list), we will use this complaints procedure. This procedure is not to be used when considering complaints from staff. In such instances, the school's grievance policy should be applied.

3.0 Aims of Procedure

The aim of this procedure is to:

- Achieve informal resolution wherever possible;
- Resolve general complaints efficiently and effectively;
- Provide a transparent process for dealing with complaints, both formally and informally;
- Ensure that all stages of the procedure will be investigatory rather than adversarial;
- Ensure that every complaint is heard and handled appropriately;
- Deal with complaints sensitivity, impartiality and confidentiality;
- Allow redress where necessary and provide information for the School Management team to improve services.

4.0 Legal Context

Section 29 of the 2002 Education Act requires governing bodies of maintained schools to establish procedures for dealing with all complaints relating to the school or the provision of facilities or services, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures (See Appendix 5), and to publicise these procedures.

5.0 Complaints Procedure

The majority of issues raised by parents, carers, the community, visitors, volunteers or pupils, are concerns rather than complaints.

A concern may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought*'.

A complaint may be defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

It is in everyone's interest that all concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Gig Mill Primary School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the schools nominated complaints *administrator*, will refer you to an alternative member of staff. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the complaints administrator will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Gig Mill Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

5.1 How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing (by letter or email) or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the headteacher via the school office**.** Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing board should be addressed to schools nominated complaints administrator via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included with this document (Appendix 1). If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations, such as Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

5.2 Anonymous Complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints unless there are exceptional circumstances, for example if there were serious child protection concerns or bullying allegations where the school would either involve appropriate external agencies or else conduct its own internal review to test whether there is any corroborative evidence which might trigger a formal investigation. The headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

5.3 Timescales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against Gig Mill Primary School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

5.4 Complaints Procedure Outside of Term Time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If a complaint is already going through the procedure and this is interrupted by a holiday the procedure will be paused until the holiday has ended. If the procedure is close to concluding as the holiday approaches, we will make reasonable attempts to get the procedure to an end prior to the holiday period but this may not always be possible.

5.5 Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Gig Mill Primary School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made;
- an undertaking to review the relevant school policies in light of the complaint;
- an apology.

When we inform you of the outcome of your complaint, we will tell you as much of the details as we can, but possibly not everything. Telling you all the details may prejudice any employee complained about and affect their ability to carry out their job effectively. The release of too much information might prevent us from the use of our disciplinary or capability procedures or contravene the employee's employment or data protection rights.

The procedure is designed to resolve any concerns with the minimum of conflict. To do this it is important that everyone has confidence in it and that it secures the "closure" of any complaint or concern.

It is unhelpful if a complaint is broadcast to the school community. Therefore, the school will make it clear to any person who raises a concern, that the school will treat the matter confidentially and will ask the complainant to do the same. The complainant must refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media.

5.6 Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing (by letter or email).

5.7 Safeguarding

Where a complaint highlights a clear child protection or safeguarding concern, a referral to the Schools Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will take place immediately.

5.8 The Formal Stages of the Complaints Procedure

Gig Mill Primary School has a clear procedure for receiving enquiries, concerns and complaints so that they are directed to the appropriate people to be dealt with.

Informal attempts to resolve the situation should have been made including, if needed, mediation, before a complaint is escalated to the formal stages.

There are two stages to the formal complaints procedure:

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (by letter or email, and preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and opened and will acknowledge this with the complainant in writing (by letter or email) within **5** school days.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation
- wherever possible these should be read and agreed with those being interviewed and signed to confirm this has happened

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within **15** school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Gig Mill Primary School will take to resolve the complaint, see 5.5 above.

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, or a member of the governing board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the headteacher should be made to the Chair of Governors. Complaints about a member of the governing board must be made to the *schools nominated complaints administrator*, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing board or
- the majority of the governing board

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing board. When concluding their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, and can clearly state their grounds for doing so, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing board's complaints committee, which will be formed of three impartial governors, who are available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure. It is not appropriate for a staff governor to sit on this committee and it would be unwise to use parent governors, unless the complaint is about a service the school provides, and does not relate directly to a pupil or members of staff.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the schools nominated complaints administrator, via the school office, within **10** school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The schools nominated complaints administrator will record the date the complaint is received and opened and acknowledge this with the complainant in writing (by letter or email) within **5** school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The school's nominated complaints administrator will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within **15** school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the schools nominated complaints administrator will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the schools nominated complaints administrator will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence based on written submissions from all parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Gig Mill Primary School available, the schools nominated complaints administrator will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, to ensure there is appropriate representation on the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations. In making their decision they will need to be sensitive to the complainant's needs and give due consideration to the complainant's wishes.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend who should act in a supportive role as described in the roles and responsibilities in Appendix 3 . Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For example, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least **10** school days before the meeting, *the schools nominated complaints administrator* will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken. It is strongly recommended that an experienced and independent clerk is used to take the minutes and provide support for the committee. Accurate minutes are essential to prevent misunderstandings and issues at a later date.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Gig Mill Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing (by letter or email), within **10** school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Gig Mill Primary School.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing board or
- the majority of the governing board

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent, co-opted governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Gig Mill Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

6.0 Next Steps for the Complainant

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Gig Mill Primary School. They will consider whether Gig Mill Primary School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
ManchesterM1 2WD.

7.0 Policy for managing serial and unreasonable complaints or contact

Gig Mill Primary School is committed to dealing with all concerns or complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who raise them. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Gig Mill Primary School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of concerns or complaints because of the frequency or nature of the contact with the school, such as, if the person contacting the school:

- refuses to articulate their concern or complaint or specify the grounds of a concern or complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the concern or complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the investigation process;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
- insists on the concern or complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on;
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly raise the same concern or complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the concern or complaint is groundless or has been addressed);

- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the concern or complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while it is being dealt with;
- uses threats to intimidate;
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
- knowingly provides falsified information;
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Those contacting the school should try to limit their communication with the school while their concern or complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

If the school feels the contacts are unreasonable, have made this clear and the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the person raising the concern or complaint explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For people who excessively contact Gig Mill Primary School as described above and cause a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing (by letter or email). This may include barring an individual from Gig Mill Primary School premises.

Appendix 1 Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the school complaints administrator who will distribute it to the appropriate person, acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. In the interest of ensuring a satisfactory outcome, we may contact you to see if this issue can be resolved as a concern rather than a formal complaint.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Mobile telephone number:** **Email Address:**
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
If your complaint <u>has already been looked into at Stage 1</u> (normally by the Head Teacher, see policy) what are your grounds for escalating the complaint?
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to: **Stage: Concern / Stage 1 / Stage 2 / TBC**
Date:

Appendix 2: Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible;
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint;
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint;
- ask for assistance as needed;
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect;
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality;
- provide clear grounds for escalating the complaint to Stage 2 if this should happen;

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
    - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved;
    - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint;
    - consideration of records and other relevant information;
    - analysing and evaluating information.
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints administrator as appropriate, to clarify what actions the complainant feels would rectify the situation.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting;
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal;
- be mindful of the timescales to respond;
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

  The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Nominated Complaints Administrator

This could be the headteacher but it might be more appropriate if it were a designated staff member with either teaching or senior administrator responsibilities or a complaints governor. If the school directly employs its own Clerk to the Governors, they could also take on this role, see appendix 4.

The complaints administrator should, either directly or by delegation:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and the LA (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure;
- ensure that all people involved in the complaints procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR);
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale;
- make a full and accurate record of the proceedings;
- circulate the minutes of the meeting;
- notify all parties of the committee's decision;.
- be aware of issues regarding:
    - sharing third party information
    - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person;

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Complaints Administrator) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting;
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy;
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person;
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant;
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
- both the complainant and the school should be given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself;

- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made clear;
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently;
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- minutes of the meeting are taken;
- they liaise with the Clerk and complaints administrator.

If a new but related issue arises, it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting.

Committee Member

No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so;
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant;
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting;
- parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child;
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting;
- careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated
- the committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults;

Supporter of the complainant

The complainant is entitled to bring a supporter with them to any meeting of the committee. The supporter should:

- provide emotional support for the complainant, should they need it;
- provide informal guidance to the complaint, where appropriate;
- address the committee if requested;
- act discreetly and allow the committee to go about work without undue interruption;
- regard all information discussed as confidential.

The supporter is not there to speak for the complainant or to represent them in any way unless there is a clear reason why a complainant is unable to fully express for themselves.

Appendix 3 The Importance of the School's Complaints Administrator

The role of Complaints Administrator is a very important one and a number of schools across the country have adopted this way of working for some time. There are no hard and fast rules as to who can be take responsibility for to this role, so the choice is one for each school to decide for itself. Bear in mind the nature of the role and try to ensure that it is someone with sufficient standing within the school to fulfil all the functions identified.

The DfE guidance that this procedure is based upon occasionally makes reference to the Clerk to the Governors within the roles and responsibilities the procedure outlines. Many schools across the country do not employ a clerk directly but rely on various clerking services provided by local authority traded services or independent service providers in their local area. In such cases, the use of the clerk might not be in the schools best interest because:

- they would need to pay for the service of the clerk in performing those duties, which would require an open ended financial commitment that may not be within agreed budgets;
- information about many concerns or complaints would be passed through services external to the school such as the local authority or an independent service provider;
- the guidance no longer includes the role of the local authority or, where relevant, the diocese, in the complaints procedure (the old Stage 5).

Where the DfE included the role of the clerk we have substituted the complaints administrator role in most cases, but have recognised that they may directly undertake tasks or delegate them as appropriate.

Appendix 4: Types of complaint excluded from the procedure and dealt with under other statutory procedures

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by schools, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory policies, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Dudley's School Admissions Service
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you are worried about a child you can telephone the MASH Team for advice and consultation on 0300 555 0050 9am - 5pm OR 0300 555 8574 after 5pm/weekends and Bank Holidays. You can also complete a Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) and email children's services at MASH_Referrals@dudley.gov.uk
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns relating to exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.*
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities but are not employed directly by the school	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

Appendix 5: Summary of the School Complaints Procedure for Gig Mill Primary School

The 2002 Education Act requires governing bodies of schools to have a procedure for complaints about the school and for them to be available for everyone to see. This is a summary of the complaints procedure for Gig Mill Primary School. You should also look at the full procedure to ensure that you understand all the details.

Concerns

Most issues raised by parents, carers or other people are concerns rather than complaints. A concern means you have a worry or doubt over something that you think is important and you would like reassurances about it. The best way to resolve your concerns is to approach a school in the first instance.

Complaints

A complaint means that you want to express dissatisfaction about an action the school has taken or a lack of action. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Gig Mill Primary School takes complaints seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

How to make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing (by letter or email) or by telephone. Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or headteacher. If, once you have done this, you are still not happy, the next step is to make a formal complaint. You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, if it is a series of similar incidents, within three months of the last of the incidents.

Most complaints (except when it is about the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the headteacher via the school office**.** Complaints that involve, or are about, the headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. Complaints about the Chair of Governors or any other governors should be addressed to school's complaints administrator via the school office. Please mark any complaint as Private and Confidential. The full complaints procedure contains a form you can use to record your complaint.

Complaints made outside of term time will only be looked at on the first school day after the holiday. If a complaint is already going through the procedure and this is interrupted by a school holiday, the procedure will pause until the holiday has ended. There is a list of timescales in the full complaints procedure document if you need to check them.

The Formal Stages of the Complaints Procedure

Gig Mill Primary School has a clear procedure for receiving enquiries, concerns and complaints, so that they are directed to the right people and can be dealt with efficiently. There are two stages to the formal complaints procedure. If your complaint is about the headteacher or governors, please refer to the full complaints procedure for details of what to do.

Stage 1

This must be made to the headteacher via the school office. The headteacher will seek to clarify the details of the complaint and might want to contact you to ask what you feel needs to be done and what outcome you would like to see.

During the investigation, the headteacher will, if necessary, interview those involved to come to a decision. At the end of their investigation, the headteacher will write a formal response and send it to you.

Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, and can clearly explain why, you can ask for the complaint to be heard at Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing board's complaints committee. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure. A request to move to Stage 2 must be made to the school's complaints administrator, via the school office, within 10 school days of you receiving the Stage 1 response.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. They will not be members of staff at the school and will probably not be parents.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting those involved to a meeting or by looking through written evidence on its own. Their decision about that should be sensitive to your needs and wishes.

If you are invited to attend the meeting, you can bring someone along for support. This can be a relative or friend who should act in a supportive role as described in the roles and responsibilities section (Appendix 3) of the full procedure .

All written material will be circulated to everyone involved at least 3 school days before the date of the meeting. The meeting will then be held in private and minutes will be taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide you and Gig Mill Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing.

If, at the completion of stage 2, you believe the school did not handle your complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably, you can contact the Department for Education. You must not do this before the end of Stage 2 because the Department for Education will require you to go back and follow the school's complaints procedure until it is complete.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate a complaint or overturn any decision made by Gig Mill Primary School. They will consider whether Gig Mill Primary School has followed education legislation correctly and any policies connected to the complaint.

You can refer a complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester. M1 2WD

Appendix 6: Timescales Within the Complaints Procedure

Note: The timescales identified in this table have been consulted on with unions and associations, and it would be unwise to alter these, although the DfE model procedure does allow for this. The recommendations below, and throughout the document, are based on the previous procedure (2015), which included 5 stages, and common practice across schools. In the DfE example procedure there is no option to change the 3-month limit for the submission of a complaint and given that the final stage a complainant has is to approach the DfE it would be unwise to do so. The timescales identified below are marked in the main text in red for ease of identification.

Page	Type of action	Suggested timescale	Rationale
4	Time scale in which a complaint must be raised	3 months	The DfE model procedure does not suggest this should be amended by schools.
5	Timescale for the acknowledgment of receipt of a complaint by the headteacher	5 school days	Previous procedure states 10 days at the old Appeals Committee stage but set no limits at earlier stages.
5	Timescale for the formal response after the investigation has taken place	15 school days	Previous procedure states 10 days from the conclusion of investigation, 15 seems reasonable to allow 5 days to investigate.
6	Timescale for the receipt of a stage 2 complaint once the findings of stage 1 are communicated	10 school days	From the previous procedure.
6	Timescale for school's complaints administrator to acknowledge the stage 2 complaint	5 school days	Previous procedure states 10 days but this was for CoG who also had to explain the arrangement for investigation requiring much more detail.
6	Timescale for the convening a meeting with the complaints committee	15 school days	Previous procedure states 20 days for CoG to complete the investigation therefore 15 days seems reasonable.
7	Timescale for administrator to communicate the date of the meeting	10 school days	Seems appropriate given the variable length of time it may take to convene the meeting.
7	Timescale for the submission of paperwork	5 school days	Previous procedure states 5 days to circulate, not gather paperwork but there is nothing else to base this on.
7	Timescale for paperwork to be distributed to all parties	3 school days	This is less than before but the previous 2 timescales dictate this and the increased use of email facilitates this.
8	Timescale for the provision of a full report following a complaints committee decision	5 school days	This is in line with the appeal committee timescales in the previous procedure.