



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

- 1.1 **Giggleswick School prides itself on the effective and caring pastoral and academic environment provided to its pupils. However, from time to time there may well be issues and genuine concerns which parents wish to raise with the School and they can expect them to be treated in accordance with this Complaints Procedure.**
- 1.2 This Complaints Procedure applies to the whole of Giggleswick School ('the School'), including Mill House Pre-School and Giggleswick Junior School. Giggleswick School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School office during the school day, and Giggleswick School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.
- 1.3 In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Giggleswick School will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education or the Independent Schools inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. In support of this requirement the School discloses that for the academic year 2020/21 there were two formal complaints. Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils. Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.
- 1.4 "Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a pupil about whom the complaint relates.

2. What Constitutes a Complaint?

- 2.1 Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School is 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, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.
- 2.2 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 generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.
- 2.3 **Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.**
- 2.4 Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this Procedure.

3. Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

- 3.1 All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days.



- 3.2 It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 working days of acknowledgement.
- 3.3 Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 working days.

The table below summarises the timeframe for each stage of the Complaints Procedure:

Stage 1

Complaint made to the School

Complaint acknowledged by the School	5	Working days since the initial complaint
Attempt to resolve the complaint through informal means	7	Working days since the initial complaint

Stage 2

Complaint in writing to the School

Discussion with parents in attempt to resolve the complaint	5	Working days since the start of stage 2
Decision on the complaint	14	Working days since the start of stage 2

Stage 3

Written complaint to the Clerk to the Governors		Within 10 days of receiving the decision at stage 2
Complaint acknowledged	5	Working days since the start of stage 3
Hearing of complaint panel	20	Working days since the start of stage 3
Written decision of complaint panel	7	Working days since the panel hearing.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only be permitted on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

4. Recording Complaints

- 4.1 Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all **formal** complaints, whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice ([Link](#)). When dealing with complaints the School (including any panel member appointed under stage 3 Panel Hearing) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Boarding status
- Boarding House/GJS
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name 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 of the hearing
- The Panel's written decision.



- 4.2 Data held by the School may include 'special category personal data' (potentially including sensitive data such as 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 Data Protection Policy. The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel Hearings as required by regulation, this being seven years for complaints that do not involve safeguarding implications.
- 4.3 Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.
- 4.4 Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.
- 4.5 Mill House Pre-School will provide OFSTED and ISI, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for a minimum of three years. Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements (see Section 6 for details of how to contact Ofsted and ISI). The School will investigate written complaints relating to their fulfilment of the EYFS requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint. The requirements of this paragraph also apply to the Reception setting at Giggleswick Junior School.

5. The 3-stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents in the Junior School have a complaint they should normally contact the Head of the Junior School.
- Parents of Senior School pupils should normally contact their son/daughter's Housemaster/Housemistress who will then notify the Deputy Head Wellbeing, the Deputy Head Academic and the Headmaster. In many cases, the matter will be resolved promptly by this means to the parents' satisfaction.
- Complaints made directly to the Head of the Junior School, the Deputy Head Wellbeing, Deputy Head Academic, or the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher/Housemaster/Housemistress unless they deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- A written record will be made by a member of SLT of all concerns and complaints, the date on which they were received and the outcome. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 working days of receipt, or in the event that there is a failure to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure. Parents will be advised in writing that the end of Stage 1 has been reached if no resolution is possible.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors whose contact details can be obtained from the school website.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis at stage 1 then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster (for the Senior School) or the Head of Junior School and Mill House Pre-School. The Headmaster / Head of the Junior School will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.



- In most cases, the Headmaster, the Head of the Junior School or the Deputy Head Wellbeing will meet or speak to the parents concerned, within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headmaster, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision. This will be given within 14 working days of the receipt of the complaint being submitted to the Headmaster in writing.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster of the Senior School, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Chair 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 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. The Chair will give reasons for her decision. If the complaint is against the Head of the Junior School then it will be dealt with by the Headmaster of the Senior School.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, 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 do so in writing to the Clerk to the Governors within 10 days of receiving the decision at stage 2, setting out their grounds for appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to reply on should also be provided with their grounds for appeal.
- The Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Complaints Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place as soon within 20 working days.
- Copies of the written complaint and the Headmaster's decision given at the end of Stage 2 shall be supplied to the Panel. 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, and/or it may invite all those involved in the complaint to supply copies of other documents upon which they intend to rely. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint 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 make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly decide whether to:
 - Dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and



- may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 7 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final.
- A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster.

6. Contacting ISI, the DfE and Ofsted

6.1 Whilst we hope that all parents and pupils will feel able to raise concerns directly with us and that we will be able to resolve them satisfactorily at an early stage, we would like parents and pupils to be aware of other bodies that they might wish to contact if they are unhappy with the response that they have received from the school. Pupils should know that they will not be penalised for a complaint made in good faith.

6.2 If a pupil, parent or member of staff has a complaint which relates to the School's general educational or boarding provision they can raise these concerns by writing to:

**Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) on 020 7600 0100 or by email to concerns@isi.net
ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA**

6.3 Parents can also contact:

Department for Education (DfE) Independent Education and Boarding Team (IEBT) on 0370 000 2288
Online at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/private-schools>
IEBT, DfE, Bishopgate House, Feethams, Darlington, DL1 5QE

6.4 If concerns relate to the provision of the EYFS requirements at Mill House Pre-School or the Reception setting at Giggleswick Junior School, parents may also contact:

Ofsted on 0300 123 1231 or by email at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

6.5 Giggleswick School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with the School's Privacy Notice and for at least three years.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

MM Turnbull, Headmaster

Reviewed with:	M Z Hodge, Bursar and Clerk to the Governors C A San Jose, Deputy Headmaster Wellbeing J R Mundell, Head of the Junior School
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