

West Twyford Primary School

Complaints Procedure Policy



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Complaints Procedure Policy

General

At West Twyford Primary School we always value warm/ productive relationships with parents/ carers and enjoy working with you to enable your child to reach their full potential.

Please tell us of your complaint as soon as possible. It is more difficult for us to investigate an incident or problem properly if it took place some time ago. We do appreciate the assistance we receive from parents/ carers in addressing any problems that arise.

We receive very few formal complaints however we recognise that sometimes things may not go as we would all wish and you may feel that we have fallen short of the high standards we set for ourselves; be dissatisfied or require clarification of school matters.

Most issues can be solved very quickly and easily, when and if, they arise and we ask you to follow the steps detailed below.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is mainly aimed at parents or carers of children who are registered at the school, but it is not limited to them.

Any member of the public may make a complaint to West Twyford Primary School about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides.

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), the school will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

- 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 concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest opportunity. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. West Twyford 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, the school office staff, will refer you to a different staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, they will refer you to another member of 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, West Twyford Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing 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 a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). 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 head teacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mr. Matthew Shapland (Head Teacher) via the school office. Please mark them as '***private and confidential***'.

Complaints that involve or are about the head teacher should be addressed to Mr. Elton Xhetani (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 body should be addressed to Ms. Toni Round (Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office. Please mark them as '**private and confidential**'.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. 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.

We always aim to investigate and resolve complaints. In order for us to deal with complaints they need to be reasonable, with clear and appropriate detail. In cases where appropriate detail is not given, or is unclear, we may ask the complainant for clarification. In the event that the complaint is not articulated, does not have specified grounds, or outcomes sought by the complainant are not specified, the school may deem this unreasonable (see appendix 2) and be unable to deal with it.

Anonymous complaints

The school does not investigate anonymous complaints. The head teacher or chair of governors, if appropriate, may decide to undertake an investigation due to an anonymous complaint but a response to this will not be issued.

Multiple or Group Complainants

The school does not investigate complaints from multiple complainants or groups of complainants. If we receive similar complaints from multiple complainants we will consider treating this as a complaint campaign (see below).

Serious and Unreasonable Complaints

West Twyford is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening. See Appendix 2 for details of behaviour considered unreasonable.

Complaint campaigns

If we receive what we consider to be a large volume of complaints, all based on the same subject and possibly from complainants not connected to the school, then we will treat these complaints as being part of a campaign and respond in one of the following two ways, depending upon the nature and scale of the complaint:

- send the same response to all complainants; or
- publish a single response on the school's website.

Timescales

Complainants 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.

Complaints received 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.

Scope of this complaints procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admissions to schools• Statutory assessments of special educational needs• School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of special educational needs or school reorganisation proposals should

	be raised with London Borough of Ealing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding. Please contact their office – 020 8825 8930</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The secretary of state for education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>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 local authority or the DfE (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any</p>

	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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National curriculum - content 	Please contact the DfE at www.education.gov.uk/contactus

In the case of an individual being barred from coming onto the school premises, they have a right to have the decision reviewed and the opportunity to submit their comments to be considered as part of the review. However, this does not mean that the full complaints procedure is available in this case. Individuals who remain dissatisfied with a decision to bar following the review should seek independent legal advice as the only remaining appeal is through the courts.

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 West Twyford 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.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, West Twyford 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 school policies in light of the complaint;
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Stage 1 Complaint

- Formal complaints must be made to the head teacher (unless they are about the

head teacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the complaint form), or by telephone. Complaints may be emailed to the office (admin@west-twyford.ealing.sch.uk). The head teacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within three (3) school days. Within this response, the head teacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The head teacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: *The head teacher 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 head teacher (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.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the head teacher will provide a formal written response within fifteen (15) school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the head teacher 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 West Twyford Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

The head teacher 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 head teacher or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the head teacher or member of the governing body must be made to the clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice chair, or the entire governing body, or the majority of the governing body, stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body or (London Borough of Ealing). At the conclusion of its investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to stage 2 must be made to the clerk, via the school office, within ten (10) school days of receipt of the stage 1 response.

The clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the

complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five (5) school days.

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

The clerk will inform the complainant of the date for this meeting within 10 days of the complaint being received. They will aim to convene a meeting within twenty (20) school days of receipt of the stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both 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 among themselves who will act as the chair of the complaints committee. If there are fewer than three governors from West Twyford Primary School available, the clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their local authority's governor services team, in order to make up 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, but in making its decision it will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 5 school days before the meeting, the Clerk 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.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least five (5) 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.

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 West Twyford primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within ten (10) school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by West Twyford Primary School.

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice chair or the entire governing body or the majority of the governing body, stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent 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 West Twyford 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.

Next steps

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 DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by West Twyford primary School. They will consider whether West Twyford Primary School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE 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

West Twyford Primary School Complaint Form

Please complete and return to West Twyford Primary School (*either head teacher / chair of governing body/ clerk to governing body – delete as appropriate*) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: Daytime telephone number: Evening telephone number:

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.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Actions should be completed as soon as practical to ensure that complaints are dealt with and resolved as quickly as possible. All timelines are subject to change in the event of unforeseen difficulties arising. In this case the complainant will be informed of any delay and the reasons for it as soon as practical.

Stage 1

Action	Timescale
Complaint received. Headteacher acknowledges receipt of complaint	Within 3 school days
Headteacher investigates complaint and responds to complainant	Within 15 school days

Stage 2

Action	Timescale
Complainant contacts the clerk to escalate the complaint to stage 2	Within 10 school days of receipt of stage 1 outcome
Clerk acknowledges receipt of complaint	Within 5 school days of receipt of stage 2 complaint received
Clerk writes to complainant to inform of date for the review meeting	Within 10 school days of receipt of stage 2 complaint received
Review meeting to take place	Within 20 school days of the stage 2 complaint received
Written submissions circulated to all parties in the meeting	5 school days prior to the meeting date
Panel's decision communicated to complainant	As soon as possible by telephone. Letter to complainant within 10 school days of the meeting.

Appendix 2: Complaints Procedure – managing serial and unreasonable complaints

West Twyford School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- raises lists of events or incidents without providing appropriate evidence/ detail to allow them to be investigated
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the 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 makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the 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 complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint 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.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the 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.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact West Twyford School causing 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 take appropriate action and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from [West Twyford School](#), and/ or informing the police.

