



General Complaints Policy

As approved by the Board of Governors

1. Introduction

We hope that parents who do have concerns, could have them addressed informally and do not therefore, have cause to make a complaint to the school. In the event that they feel it is necessary to do so, the School and Governors have adopted the following complaints procedure. This procedure is based upon the "Guidance Notes and model procedure" produced by West Sussex County Council's Governor Services.

This policy does not cover complaints relating to the curriculum, provision for pupils with special needs, admissions or exclusions. Statutory procedures are in place for those complaints and further assistance is available on request from the school.

The policy is designed to resolve disagreements as quickly and efficiently as possible. Each stage should be exhausted before the complaint is taken to the next level.

2. Safeguarding

The safeguarding of children is paramount at Twineham. Specific policies relating to this area are kept in a file in the School Office as well as in the general policies files. All staff are required to read these policies and commit to the high regard safeguarding has at the school and fulfil all safeguarding duties. To this end all visitors supporting the school curriculum will be DBS checked or never left alone with the children and will be supervised by a member of staff (who will be DBS checked as a matter of course). Children are to be reminded about safety and keeping themselves safe and opportunities provided in the curriculum to reinforce this will be taken.

3. Equal Opportunities

Twineham is committed to providing equality of opportunity and there is a separate Equalities Policy which should read alongside this policy. Reasonable adjustments to the curriculum will be made to maximise opportunities for all children to access learning and the curriculum. In school every opportunity will be taken to explore equality and the impact of discrimination.

4. An overview of the principles

The Staged Approach

The staged approach is designed to ensure that every effort is made to deal with complaints informally at school level, in partnership with parents. The formal stages should only be triggered in exceptional circumstances:

- Stage 1 is the informal stage which is dealt with at school level;
- Stages 2 and 3 are formal stages involving the Headteacher and Governing Body

Aims

Our principal aims are to deal with complaints:

- Openly
- Fairly
- Promptly
- Without prejudice
- Confidentially

Procedures

Our procedures for dealing with complaints are designed to be:

- Simple to understand and use
- Focused on achieving a result
- Have established time limits for action
- Keep all parties informed at all stages
- Confidential
- Carefully monitored and evaluated
- Fully and properly recorded
- Impartial

The complaints procedure will also be published on the School website.

5. The Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure consists of 3 stages. These stages are set out in more detail below. If a complaint cannot be resolved at a particular level, then the complaint will be taken to the next level, Stage 1 is informal; Stages 2 and 3 are formal. At all stages, any person expressing continued dissatisfaction should be advised of the next stage in the procedure.

Stage one: Meet and/or speak to the relevant teacher

- If you are dissatisfied, you should first speak to the teacher concerned, so that everyone has a clear picture of the situation from all points of view. Most problems can be resolved at this informal stage. You will be encouraged to suggest what you think might resolve this issue.
- The member of staff who is dealing with the complaint will ensure that the person is reassured that the matter will be investigated and is clear what action has been agreed. All staff are aware of the need for confidentiality.
- If either the complainant or staff member feels the matter needs to be taken further, a senior member of staff should be contacted.
- Records of any actions will always be kept. These records will be monitored by a Senior Teacher every term.
- If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved, then it can move to Stage 2.

Stage two: Meet and/or speak to the Headteacher or senior member of staff.

- The complaint should be referred to the Headteacher or a senior member of staff. He/she will then investigate the matter further. Any meetings that are held with the complainant in relation to the complaint should be arranged within 10 school days. However more complex complaints may require an extension to this time limit.
- A record of all contacts relating to the complaint should be kept.
- The Headteacher or Senior Teacher will communicate the outcome and any agreed actions to the complainant. This will usually be in writing.
- If, as a result of the investigation, issues arise relating to staff discipline or capability, details will remain confidential to the Headteacher. However, the complainant will be informed in writing of the appropriate follow-up action.
- Following this, if it is still unresolved, the complaint should progress to Stage 3.

Stage three: Make a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors (or nominated Governor) who will then convene a Complaints Appeal Panel.

- Governors will only proceed with this formal stage of the Complaint Procedure if they have received a complaint in writing addressed to the Chair of Governors and all previous stages have been exhausted.

- Acknowledgement of the written complaint will normally be sent by the clerk to the Governing Body within 5 school days.
- It is essential that this process is fair and objective. To avoid a conflict of interest, it is vital that the full governing Body will not hear the complaint at this stage. Any Governor who has been involved with the complaint at an earlier stage would be unable to give objective consideration to the issue.
- The Governing Body will convene a small panel of 3 or 5 Governors who have not previously been involved in the complaint, and may come from another School. The panel will usually meet within 15 school days of receiving the complaint.
- The Chair of the panel will notify the Headteacher and the complainant as to whether they will be invited to attend the panel meeting, and the hearing will proceed in an informal, but appropriate manner. Alternatively, the panel may decide to consider written material only. Both parties will be treated equally. For example, if the Headteacher is invited to the meeting, so will the complainant.
- If the complaint relates to a staff disciplinary or capability matter about which the Headteacher has already taken action, the Governors will focus on how the original complaint was managed to avoid prejudicing any ongoing disciplinary or capability procedures.
- The Headteacher and complainant will be informed of the Panel's decision in writing within 10 school days.
- This is the final stage in the school's Complaints Procedure and the matter is now closed.

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be viewed as "serial" or "persistent" and the school may choose not to respond.

Officers from Governor Services will attend Complaints Appeal Panel meetings on request. The officer's role is to act as an independent observer and/or offer advice.

There is no further right of appeal against the Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel decision. If the complainant remains dissatisfied and believes the Panel has acted unreasonably in response to the complaint, the complainant should be advised to write to The School Complaints Unit (SCU) at: Department for Education, 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD or in some circumstances, Ofsted if the complaint is likely to lead to a determination there is a need to inspect. Ofsted cannot seek to resolve any individual complaint.