



**General Teaching Council
for England**

**Complaining
to
The General Teaching Council**

September 2006

Complaining to the GTC

Information for parents and the public

Can I complain about educational issues directly to the General Teaching Council for England (GTC)?

The GTC is not a general education complaints body. If you have serious concerns about your child's education, the best starting point will normally be the school your child attends. Contact the head teacher to discuss the matter.

If you are not happy with the school's response, ask them about the school's complaints procedure. This will explain how to follow through your complaint, including the role of the governing body in considering complaints.

Broader concerns about state education in your local area should be directed to the Corporate Director for Children's Services of your Local Authority (LA).

Independent schools have their own arrangements, which will be explained by the school.

Issues of national educational policy should be directed to one of these national government agencies:

- National curriculum and testing arrangements – Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA)
- School inspection – Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)
- National education policy – the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

There are contact details at the back of this leaflet.

What are the responsibilities of the General Teaching Council?

The General Teaching Council has the following legal responsibilities:

- To establish and maintain a Register of teachers
- To regulate registered teachers through disciplinary procedures
- To provide advice to government and other bodies on educational matters.

How does the GTC exercise its disciplinary powers?

The GTC has the power to decide on the ability of registered teachers to continue to teach in maintained (state) schools and non-maintained special schools. We consider cases of serious incompetence, misconduct and criminal convictions.

We only consider cases of teacher incompetence which are referred by the employer of a registered teacher where the employer has ended the employment of a teacher (or the teacher has resigned short of this stage).

Where an employer has ended the employment of the teacher for reasons of misconduct (or the teacher has resigned short of this stage), the employer must refer the case to the DfES. The DfES is responsible for deciding whether the teacher can continue to work with children and young people for reasons relating to children's safety and welfare. The DfES refers onto the GTC cases of misconduct which do not fall into this category.

Can I complain direct to the GTC about a teacher's competence?

No. Concerns about a teacher's competence should be raised initially with the head teacher of the school.

If you are dissatisfied with their response, ask them about the school's complaints procedure.

Can I complain direct to the GTC about a teacher's conduct?

Yes. Although the majority of misconduct cases are referred to us by employers, we also consider complaints of serious misconduct made directly to us.

The Council's test in considering such complaints is whether they are serious enough to affect a teacher's registration status. We would therefore expect most concerns about a teacher's conduct to be dealt with by employers at local level through local grievance, complaint or appeal procedures. If you have concerns regarding a teacher's conduct, we strongly recommend that you have recourse to such local procedures before raising the matter with the GTC.

If you have done so, and wish to pursue the matter, it is important that you are specific about your concerns and can provide relevant supporting evidence. You will be asked to complete a form so that the nature of your concerns is clear.

Upon receipt of the complaint, the Registrar of the Council will consider whether it is capable of amounting to an allegation of unacceptable professional conduct which could affect the teacher's registration. If so, the case will then be referred to an Investigating Committee of Council members.

In considering the matter, the Registrar will normally contact the teacher and any employer and invite them to comment on the complaint. The teacher will therefore know that you have raised concerns about them.

If we find that the employer does not know about the complaint, or that they are in the process of considering it, we will normally wait until their own disciplinary procedures are complete before considering the matter further.

If the matter goes before an Investigating Committee, the Committee may refer the case forward for a hearing, or discontinue it if it does not appear to raise concerns relevant to a teacher's registration.

If at any stage the case raises issues relating to the safety and welfare of children and young people we will refer it to the DfES.

What action could the GTC take?

Hearings go before either our Professional Conduct Committee or Professional Competence Committee.

Either Committee can:

- Issue a reprimand in relation to the teacher's registration for a two year period
- Apply conditions (such a retraining and updating) to a teacher's registration
- Suspend a teacher from the Register (for up to two years) with or without conditions
- Prohibit the teacher from teaching in a maintained (state) school or a non-maintained special school for a period of time.

The teacher can appeal to the High Court against the decision.

Hearings are normally held in public, unless the committee agrees there are any particular reasons (such as the protection of child witnesses) as to why all or part of the hearing should be held in private.

How to make a complaint:

- Contact the GTC, and request a form (contact details below).
- Complete, sign and return the form, ensuring that any previous investigations into this matter and their outcome are included in your response.
- If you wish to make complaints against more than one registered teacher regarding unacceptable professional conduct, complete one form for each individual.

Your response should include:

- a detailed and specific description of the conduct that you consider amounts to unacceptable professional conduct.
- any further information and/or supporting documents you may have
- contact details of any person or body who may have been involved in any previous investigation of the complaint

On receipt of your completed form and supporting information the Council will acknowledge your complaint and schedule your case for preliminary consideration by the Registrar.

Contacts

Misconduct complaints to the GTC about a teacher

Alan Sweeney or Sharon Timmins
Professional Standards Team Leaders
General Teaching Council
Victoria Square House
Victoria Square
Birmingham B2 4AJ
Direct line: 0121 345 0065/0044
Switchboard: 0870 001 0308
Fax: 0121 345 0100

Complaints about the National Curriculum and testing arrangements

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
83 Piccadilly
London W1J 8QA
Tel: 020 7509 5555
Web: www.qca.org.uk

Complaints about school inspection

Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
Tel: 020 7421 6800
Web: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Complaints about national education policy

Department for Education and Skills
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT
Tel: 0870 001 2345
Web: www.dfes.gov.uk

Complaints about a Governing Body

Public Communications Unit
DfES
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Tel: 0870 0002288

If the teacher is not registered with the GTC

School Workforce Group
Room 31
Mowden Hall
Staindrop Road
Darlington
DL3 9GB

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19-30 Alfred Place
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