



Complaints process FAQs

Making a complaint about a teacher – the role of the Teaching Council and FAQs

If you have a concern about a teacher's behaviour or competence you should first contact the teacher's employer (the school or centre where they work) in almost every instance. The teacher's employer must be given a chance to investigate your concerns unless exceptional circumstances apply (see more information on this below).

If you are not happy with how the school or centre has dealt with the issue, you can then raise your concerns directly with Teaching Council if they involve the conduct or competence of a registered teacher (or the holder of a limited authority to teach).

When a concern is brought to the Teaching Council, our role is to examine the teacher's alleged actions in accordance with *Ngā Tikanga Matatika, Ngā Paerewa | Our Code, Our Standards*. This can lead to a referral to a disciplinary body to take action if appropriate.

The Teaching Council does not have jurisdiction to consider disputes between parents and schools or centres.

FAQ's:

When can I make a complaint to the Teaching Council directly?	2
What happens once have made my complaint to the Teaching Council?	2
What can the Triage Committee do with my complaint?	2
What should I do if my complaint is about the principal of a school?	2
What should I do if my complaint is about the centre manager of an ECE service?	2
What if I don't want the complaint referred to the school/centre/employer? What about if I want to remain anonymous?	3
What kind of action can the Teaching Council take? Can you have the teacher dismissed?	3
If my complaint is referred for a Complaints Assessment Committee (CAC) investigation, how long does it take?	3
What do I do if I am not satisfied with how the Board of Trustees dealt with my complaint?	3
What if my complaint is about someone at the school or centre who isn't a registered teacher?	3
What happens with the information I provide with my complaint?	3
How will I receive an outcome of the case?	4
Are some Teaching Council decisions made public?	4
What do I do if I am not satisfied with how the Teaching Council dealt with my complaint?	4

When can I make a complaint to the Teaching Council directly?

- If the complaint is about a teacher who is not currently employed by an employer.
- If the person making the complaint considers, on reasonable grounds, that the employer is unable to deal with the complaint effectively because of an actual or a perceived conflict of interest.
- If the complaint has been made to the employer, but the person making the complaint is not satisfied with the way in which the complaint is being, or was, dealt with.
- In any other exceptional circumstance. Please note that an exceptional circumstance doesn't relate to the details of the conduct or competence issue, but rather an exceptional circumstance as to why it can't be dealt with by the employer in the first instance.

What happens once have made my complaint to the Teaching Council?

Once your complaint is received our Triage Committee makes an initial assessment of the complaint along with any supporting information provided.

The teacher involved will be provided with a copy of your complaint (including any supporting information provided) and invited to respond to the allegations to help inform the Triage Committee's assessment of appropriate next steps.

The Triage Committee is made up of Council staff, including experienced, registered teachers. There is an emphasis on ensuring appropriate tikanga Māori is followed and te ao Māori perspective is included.

It is important that you provide all supporting documentation with your initial complaint so that the triage process does not require multiple requests for clarification or supporting information.

What can the Triage Committee do with my complaint?

The Triage Committee can decide to:

- Take no further action, for example if the complaint does not relate to a conduct or competence issue, or the relevant alleged actions are unlikely to require a disciplinary response.
- Refer the issue to the teacher's employer.
- Refer the matter to a Complaints Assessment Committee (CAC), if the matter relates to a teacher's conduct.
- Refer the matter to a Professional Practice Evaluator if the matter is about a teacher's competence.

What should I do if my complaint is about the principal of a school?

Your complaint should initially be submitted to the Board of Trustees of the school, as they are the principal's employer.

What should I do if my complaint is about the centre manager of an ECE service?

Your complaint should initially be made to either the centre owner or the organisation (as applicable).

What if I don't want the complaint referred to the school/centre/employer? What about if I want to remain anonymous?

We are required to act in accordance with the principles of natural justice, which includes ensuring transparency and fairness. Ordinarily, we do not act on anonymous complaints. When there are matters that involve safety of learners we may approach the school or centre for comment and provide them with the information for action.

If you do not want the matter referred to the teacher or school/centre we would be unlikely to be able to progress matters unless an exceptional circumstance applies, in which case we would discuss this with you directly.

What kind of action can the Teaching Council take? Can you have the teacher dismissed?

The Teaching Council has no mandate over employment matters. Our role is confined to then making the initial decision on what should happen with a complaint (whether taking no further action, appointing an investigator to investigate alleged serious misconduct on behalf of a Complaints Assessment Committee, or referring the matter to a Complaints Assessment Committee or Professional Practice Evaluator).

It is the disciplinary bodies ([Complaints Assessment Committees and/or the Disciplinary Tribunal](#)), and the Competence Authority, that can take further action such as cancelling a teacher's practising certificate or registration. The matter must be referred to these entities for this to happen.

Employment issues are between the teacher and the school.

If my complaint is referred for a Complaints Assessment Committee (CAC) investigation, how long does it take?

It depends on the complexity of the case. We aim for six to nine months for an investigation, however other factors such as other agency involvement (such as the involvement of Police or Oranga Tamariki) can affect the timeframe.

What do I do if I am not satisfied with how the Board of Trustees dealt with my complaint?

You can complain to the Office of the Ombudsman, who has the authority to investigate School Boards of Trustees in New Zealand. [See here](#).

What if my complaint is about someone at the school or centre who isn't a registered teacher?

Your complaint should be made to the employer: i.e., the school principal or ECE centre manager. Note that holders of limited authorities to teach also fall within the definition of "teacher", so can be the subject of complaints to the Council.

What happens with the information I provide with my complaint?

Your complaint in its entirety will be shared with the teacher about whom you have complained. It will also be viewed by Teaching Council staff as part of the triage process, as well as those involved in any potential subsequent processes (e.g., CAC, Disciplinary Tribunal). Your information will be held confidentially and will not be released publicly by the Teaching Council.

How will I receive an outcome of the case?

After the Triage Committee has considered the matter, you will receive a decision letter telling you what actions will be taken and why. Note that the Teaching Council is limited in the amount of information we can provide a person making a complaint. You are entitled, by law, to know the outcome of a matter but you may not be able to receive much in the way of progress reports or other information because our processes are confidential (as are matters dealt with by CACs).

Are some Teaching Council decisions made public?

If a Complaints Assessment Committee refers a matter to the [Disciplinary Tribunal](#), some decisions of the Disciplinary Tribunal are publicly available on the [Teaching Council website](#).

What do I do if I am not satisfied with how the Teaching Council dealt with my complaint?

If you are unhappy with the process, you may make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.