



Whistle Blowing Policy

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Committee is responsible for this policy.

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This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Confidentiality Policy

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Safer Recruitment Policy

The Governors and Head teacher are committed to delivering a high quality education service to its pupils and expects high standards from their staff and contractors. In order to maintain those high standards a culture of openness and accountability is vitally important. The aims of this policy are threefold: -

- to encourage staff to raise concerns about malpractice within the School without fear of reprisal
- to reassure staff that concerns will be taken seriously
- to provide information about how to raise concerns and explain how the Governors and the Head teacher will respond

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within school. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or the school. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

The Governing Body are committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees, and others that we deal with,

who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

Under this Whistleblowing Policy you can raise such concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. The Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the school rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

The policy applies to all employees and applies equally to those designated as casual, temporary, agency, authorised volunteers/work experience, governors. It also applies to those contractors working for the school on the school's premises e.g. agency staff, builders, drivers, and covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the school in their own premises.

These procedures are in addition to the complaints procedures of the school and other statutory reporting procedures. Service users should be made aware of the existence of these procedures.

What is whistleblowing?

In practical terms, whistleblowing occurs when a concern is raised about danger or illegality that affects others. As the person blowing the whistle you will not necessarily be directly affected by the danger or illegality. Consequently, you will not necessarily have a personal interest in the outcome of any investigation into your concerns. This is different from a complaint or grievance. If you make a complaint or lodge a grievance, you are saying that you personally have been poorly treated. This poor treatment could involve a breach of your individual employment rights or bullying, and you are entitled to seek redress for yourself.

Blowing the Whistle on Malpractice

Malpractice covers a wide range of concerns. The types of activity that should be disclosed include but are not limited to the following: -

- the physical, emotional or sexual abuse of pupils or staff
- financial maladministration
- unauthorised use of School funds
- fraud and corruption
- failure to comply with legal obligations
- endangering of an individual's health and safety
- damage to the environment
- a criminal offence
- failure to follow financial and contract procedure rules
- showing undue favour to a contractor or a job applicant
- miscarriages of justice
- deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above

Staff should raise their concerns with the Head teacher, or Deputy Head teacher or their manager as soon as any suspected malpractice becomes apparent. Remember that the earlier you raise concerns the easier it will be to take action. You (the whistleblower) are a witness to events, not a complainant and so you do not need to wait for proof of malpractice before raising concerns.

When reporting a concern you should provide as much information and detail as possible. In particular you should provide the full names of the people involved or who know about what is happening, including the names of teachers and other staff members, dates of events and any relevant documentation. This will help the investigator to focus on the main issues quickly.

There will be some cases where it is not appropriate for you to raise concerns with your Head teacher/Line Manager, for example where you suspect your Head teacher/ Line Manager already knows about the malpractice and appears to be 'turning a blind eye', or where you suspect your Head teacher/ Line Manager may be involved. In those cases, you should report your concerns to the Governors.

Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. You will be advised whether an investigation takes place or not. When making a decision the Head teacher will consider whether continuing with an investigation is in the public interest.

Advice and Support

The School recognises that staff may wish to seek advice and support from their professional association or trade union before blowing the whistle and you are strongly advised to do so.

If staff and volunteers unable to raise an issue or feel that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they may report their concerns to other whistleblowing channels, such as:

Staff can also seek advice from the NSPCC whistle blowing helpline:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/>

Protect, an independent whistleblowing charity (helpline 020 3117 2502, email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk, website: www.pcaw.co.uk)

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, anyone making a disclosure under this Policy may need to provide evidence as a witness, and in these cases, it may not always be possible for you to remain anonymous.

Anonymous Allegations

You are encouraged to give your name when raising concerns. A concern expressed anonymously is much less powerful and is often more difficult to investigate. The decision whether to investigate an anonymous allegation will be made by the Head teacher and/ or the Chair of Governors. When making this decision they will take into account the seriousness of the issues raised, the credibility of what is being said and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.

Protection for the Whistleblower

All concerns raised under this procedure will be treated seriously and a decision made about whether or not an investigation is appropriate. Depending upon the nature of the matter it may be referred to the external auditor or the police. The person to whom you reported your concern will be responsible for keeping you informed about the progress of the investigation and the action, which has been taken, although you may not be told the outcome. In some cases the investigation may result in criminal or disciplinary proceedings. If this happens you may be invited to give a written statement or give evidence at a hearing. The Head teacher and Governors will support you in this process and ensure that you are clear about what will happen.

The Head teacher and the Governors will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect you if you have raised a concern in good faith. Any employee who is found to have victimised or harassed an employee who has raised a concern will face disciplinary action.

Allegations not made in Good Faith

Concerns that are raised frivolously, maliciously, for personal gain or where they are known to be untrue may result in disciplinary action or, in the case of agency staff, the termination of the agency contract. In the case of contractors, the matter will be reported to the relevant Contract Manager so that a decision can be made about the appropriate action to take.

Untrue allegations

If you make an allegation which you believe is in the public interest but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

Reviews and Operation of this Policy

The Governors have overall responsibility for the operation of this policy. (This policy has to be formally adopted by the Governors and will be reviewed every year.)

Authority

The Full Board of Governors, by delegation to sub-committees, is responsible for formulating the policies and procedures that will ensure the school continue to achieve the aims of the overall school strategy. Hence, each sub-committee has Terms of Reference and assigned responsibility for policies within that scope. The sub-committees are: Finance and General Purposes Committee, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee, Safeguarding Committee, Education Committee and Marketing Committee.