

Whistleblowing Policy

Reviewed and updated 07th February 2024

Introduction

The school is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability and we encourage staff and others working with us to raise any concerns. This policy will work to ensure that, if an employee sees or suspects that something is wrong about the attitude or actions of colleagues, including supply staff and volunteers, they will raise it. This is called “blowing the whistle”- a phrase that should be viewed as a positive action of speaking up.

The school has adopted this policy and the accompanying procedure on whistleblowing to give confidence to members of staff when raising concerns about conduct or practice that is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical, or which amounts to malpractice or inconsistent with school standards and policies. It will enable staff to raise concerns internally and in a confidential fashion, but also provides for such concerns to be raised outside the organisation if necessary.

If a member of staff believes that a reported allegation or concern is not being dealt with appropriately by their organisation, they should report the matter to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their employer or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels may be open to them:

- General guidance can be found at: advice on whistleblowing (<https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing>)
- The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line is also available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 and the line is available from 08:00 to 20:00 Monday to Friday, and 09:00 to 18:00 at weekends. The email address is: help@nspcc.org.uk

Members of staff should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise grievances about their personal employment situation. This procedure is to enable members of staff to express legitimate and serious concerns regarding suspected malpractice, without fear of reprisal or victimisation, internally within the school or outside.

This procedure is separate from the school Complaints Procedures and other statutory reporting procedures. Child Protection issues should be reported according to the specific guidelines laid out in the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding/Safer Recruitment Policy.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice under this procedure will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect an individual.

Behaviour that should cause concern:-

- A criminal offence has been committed, is likely to be committed or is being committed
- Conduct that has occurred, is occurring or is likely occur the result of which the school fails to comply with a legal obligation.
- A person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which they are subject;
- A miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur
- Past, current or likely health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as employees
- Past, current or likely damage to the environment
- Information tending to show any matter falling within any of the preceding points has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed

Reasons for whistleblowing

Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour:

- To prevent the problem worsening or widening.
- To protect or reduce risks to others.
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself.

What stops people from whistleblowing

- Starting a chain of events which spirals.
- Disrupting the work or project.
- Fear of getting it wrong.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers.
- Fear of not being believed.

How to raise a concern

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken.
- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why.
- If your concern is about another member of staff approach the headteacher. If your concern is about the headteacher, contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for your area.
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don't let matters rest.
- You should put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving any relevant names, dates and places where you can and the reason for the concern.
- A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.

What happens next

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- Your employer has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence.

Confidentiality

All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if this is your wish. However, in certain cases, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality if you are required to come forward as a witness.

Anonymous Allegations

Whenever possible you should put your name to your allegation, as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful than those that are attributed to a named individual.

However anonymous allegations will be considered and investigated at the school's discretion.

Individuals who would like to seek professional and confidential advice should contact Protect, a registered charity that advises on whistleblowing queries: www.protect-advice.org.uk or they can be contacted on 020 31172520.

Ref:

- 'Keeping children safe in education', DFE, 2023
- 'Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998'
- GOV.UK 'Whistleblowing for employees'
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line – nspcc.org.uk
- How to contact the LADO - Please call 020 7641 7668 and ask to speak to the Duty Child Protection Adviser/ LADO. Email lado@westminster.gov.uk
- For further information on the LADO and making a referral please visit: <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/lscp/information-professionals-and-volunteers/lado-managing-allegations>

Name _____

Date _____

Signature _____