



CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING (WHISTLEBLOWING) POLICY

Committee Responsible:	HR Committee
Person Responsible:	Headteacher
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1 Introduction

The Governing Body of our School is committed to achieving the highest possible standards of service and the highest possible standards in public life within a culture of openness and accountability. Accordingly, it encourages members of staff to use the procedure outlined in this policy to raise concerns of internal malpractice, illegal acts or omissions without fear of harassment or victimisation. This policy sets out the way in which such concerns can, and should, be raised by members of staff without fear of reprisal.

2 The Aim of this Policy

This policy aims to:

- provide a process for members of staff to raise concerns and receive feedback (where appropriate) on any action taken;
- allow members of staff to take matters further if they are dissatisfied with the response they receive and
- reassure members of staff that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for 'whistleblowing' in good faith.

3 The Objectives of this Policy



This policy:

- demonstrates that our school is committed to ensuring its affairs are carried out ethically, honestly, and to high standards;
- is good employment practice;
- shows that our school has introduced procedures to protect public safety and public money;
- will help develop a culture of openness, accountability and integrity;
- will encourage staff to raise matters internally, making wider disclosures less likely;
- will contribute to the efficient running of our school and the delivery of services;
- will help curb corruption, fraud and mismanagement and
- will help uphold the reputation of our school and maintain public confidence.

The policy applies to all employees and volunteers in our school (including agency staff).

4 The Scope of this Policy

The expression 'whistleblowing' is commonly used to describe circumstances where an employee makes a disclosure of a kind referred to within the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 ('The Act'). The Act was effected in order to afford protection to employees who report acts or omissions which could be described as falling within the following definitions:

- a criminal offence;
- breach of a legal obligation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- a danger to the health and safety of any individual;
- damage to the environment or
- deliberately covering up of information tending to show any of the above.

In the event that a member of staff has concerns that something of this nature has occurred at work they should disclose all relevant information in accordance with the reporting mechanisms described later in this document.

The School has a range of policies and procedures, which deal with standards of behaviour at work; they cover Discipline, Grievance, Capability, Harassment and



Recruitment and Selection. Members of staff are encouraged to use the provisions of these procedures when appropriate.

There may be times, however, when the matter needs to be handled in a different way. This policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures for example:

- malpractice or ill treatment of a pupil by a member of staff;
- where a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed;
- suspected fraud;
- disregard for legislation, particularly in relation to health and safety at work;
- breach of standing financial instructions;
- showing improper conduct in matters related to appointment or
- a breach of a Code of Conduct and/or information on any of the above which has been, or is likely to be, concealed.

In the event that a member of staff has concerns that something of this nature has occurred at work then they should disclose all relevant information in accordance with the reporting mechanisms described later in this document.

In making such disclosures the member of staff will only be afforded protection by the Act in the event that any such disclosure is made:

- in good faith;
- if it is believed that the disclosure is substantially true;
- if the Whistleblower has not acted maliciously; and /or
- if the disclosure is not for personal gain.

Provided that the disclosure is of a kind described above and, additionally, it is made properly in accordance with those matters referred to in the first and last bullet points above, then the member of staff will be legally protected from suffering any detriment in relation to their employment as a result of having made that disclosure.

5 Confidentiality

The Governing Body will do its best to protect the identity of a member of staff who decides to make a disclosure in accordance with this policy and who does not want their name to be revealed. However, if a consequent investigation is initiated, it may be necessary to reveal the source of the complaint, and the Whistleblower may be asked to provide a relevant statement.



6 Designated Officer

The Designated Officer for the School is the Headteacher and he is the point of contact for concerns raised under this Whistleblowing Procedure. If the issue being raised is in relation to the Headteacher the point of contact will be the Chair of Governors.

7 Anonymous Allegations

The Governing Body encourages those making a disclosure to put their name to their allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but they may be considered at the discretion of the Designated Officer. In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account may include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility of the concern and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

Allegations which do not appear to be motivated by personal animosity and which, if true, would have serious implications for the School, are more likely to be considered, despite the fact that they have been made anonymously.

8 Untrue Allegations

If a member of staff makes an allegation, which is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action shall be taken against the Whistleblower. If, however, the allegation is considered to have been made either maliciously or vexatiously then disciplinary action may be taken.

9 How to Raise a Concern

9.1 First Step

- A member of staff with a concern should usually raise this with his/her immediate line manager first. The manager would then refer the matter to the Designated Officer.
- If the line manager is involved the member of staff should raise the concerns with the Designated Officer.
- If the Designated Officer is involved the member of staff should raise the concern with the Chair of Governors.
- If the Chair of Governors is involved the Designated Officer should raise the concern with the Executive Director of Care Wellbeing and Education at West Sussex County Council.

9.2 Confirmation of Concerns



- Concerns should be confirmed in writing setting out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason for concern.
- Members of staff who do not initially feel able to put their concerns in writing should meet the Designated Officer.
- Advice and guidance on how matters of concern may be pursued can be obtained from Children's Services Human Resources team or from trade unions or professional associations.
- Trade union or professional association representatives will have the protection given to complainants under the procedure, provided that they act in accordance with the procedure with regard to the information so disclosed.

9.3 The Initial Response

- The Designated Officer will arrange an initial interview. At this stage, the Whistleblower will be reassured that he/she will be protected from possible victimisation, and will be asked if he/she wants to make a written or verbal statement. In either case, the Designated Officer will then write a brief summary of the interview, which will be agreed by both parties.
- As far as possible, the confidentiality of the Whistleblower will be protected, however this cannot be guaranteed.
- The Designated Officer will report to the Chair of Governors, who may set up any further necessary investigations. This may include an external investigation.

9.4 The Investigation

In order to protect individuals and the School, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures. It may be necessary for an investigation to take place in strict confidence (with the person(s) under investigation not being informed until necessary).

If it is necessary to suspend a member of staff while the investigation takes place the procedure in the Disciplinary Policy will be used. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation, others may have to be referred to the Police, an external audit or form the subject of an independent inquiry. The Governing Body recognises the contribution that trade unions can make to any inquiry and agrees to consult, where appropriate, with



the recognised trade union/s about the issues, such as the scope of any inquiry and the implementation of its recommendations.

9.5 The Designated Officer will endeavour to:

- confirm receipt in writing (within five working days) of a concern being received, acknowledging that the concern has been received and
- write (within ten working days) indicating how he proposes to deal with the matter, where possible giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a response, detailing whether any initial enquiries have been made, and whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.

9.6 The matters raised may:

- be disposed of without further action;
- be investigated internally;
- be referred to the Police;
- be referred to an External Auditor and/or
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

In order to protect individuals and the School, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

9.7 The Response

Following the Investigation the Designated Officer will (subject to legal constraints) inform the Chair of Governors and the Whistleblower of the result of the investigation. (This will not include details of any disciplinary action, which will remain confidential to the individual concerned). If the investigation shows there is a case to be answered, the Disciplinary or Capability Procedure may be used.

If there is no case to answer, the Designated Officer will inform the Chair of Governors of this fact. Disciplinary action will be taken against the Whistleblower where a false allegation is made maliciously.

10 Records

A note of the concern raised, how it was resolved and copies of any records associated with the investigation will be stored confidentially for seven years following resolution.



11 Further Recourse

This policy is intended to provide members of staff with a way in which to raise concerns within the School.

If the Whistleblower is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, the Whistleblower may make a disclosure to a prescribed person, such as the Health and Safety Executive, Audit Commission, the Environmental Agency, OFTEL, OFFER, OFWAT, OFGAS, Rail Regulator, FSA, Serious Fraud Agency, Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise, DTI, Office of Fair Trading, Trade Union Certification Officer, Charity Commissioners, Data Protection Registrar the local Council or Public Concern at Work, notwithstanding the result of the investigation.

If the Whistleblower chooses to take the matter outside the School, the Whistleblower will need to ensure that he/she will not disclose confidential information; in this regard the Whistleblower should first check with the Designated Officer.

12 Responsible Officer

The Designated Officer has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. The Designated Officer will maintain a record of concerns raised, and the outcomes (in a way which does not endanger confidentiality), and shall report as necessary to the Governing Body.

13 The Law

This policy and procedure has been written to take account of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which protects workers making disclosures about certain matters of concern, where those disclosures are made in accordance with the Act's provisions. The Act is incorporated into the Employment Rights Act 1996, which protects employees who take action over, or raise concerns about, health and safety at work.

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