



Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

This policy will be reviewed annually and more often should legislation or circumstances require it.

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Approved by:

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Chair of Governors

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Russell Scott Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

Introduction

The School is committed to operating with honesty and integrity, and expects all staff, including supply/agency staff, to maintain high standards in accordance with their contractual obligations and the school's policies and procedures.

However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

This procedure is not a substitute for normal line management processes but an addition to them. Staff should always first consider using normal line management for raising concerns. This procedure is only for the purpose of raising concerns about wrongdoing and is not a substitute or alternative for existing procedures such as the Grievance Procedures for staff or the complaints procedure.

Throughout this document, the term 'staff' includes all agency and supply staff working in school but not directly employed by the school.

Aims of the policy

- To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected;
- To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns;
- To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be a mistaken.

What is whistleblowing?

A whistle blower is a person who raises a general concern (in good faith) related to any of the following wrongdoings:

- unlawful act (e.g. theft, fraud or corruption)
- a miscarriage of justice
- health and safety breach
- child protection and safeguarding concerns
- environmental or property damage
- improper conduct
- breach of the school's policies including the Code of Conduct
- concealing or attempting to cover up any of the above.

The wrongdoing you disclose must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others. Anyone with serious concerns about any wrongdoing will be encouraged to come forward with these concerns. Any employee raising concerns will be protected from reprisals or victimisation as long as the employee is not acting maliciously or for personal gain.

School follows the Tameside Whistleblowing Policy -see <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/whistleblowing> for full details. This procedure places the policy in a school context.

If a member of staff is unsure whether something is within the scope of this policy they should seek further advice from the Headteacher and if the matter is in relation to an alleged wrongdoing by the Headteacher then staff should seek advice from the Chair of Governors.

School Context

This code provides additional information to help staff to understand the role of whistleblowing in the context of poor practice and unacceptable conduct and attitudes towards children.

When to use the code

The whistleblowing procedures and this code may be used by anyone employed by the school in a paid or voluntary capacity who believes they have reason to suspect that the conduct of an employee towards a pupil is inappropriate. This includes supply staff who may be working at the school.

Inappropriate conduct includes, but is not confined to:

- bullying or humiliation
- contravening health and safety guidelines
- serious breaches of the school's Code of Conduct
- professional practice that falls short of normally accepted standards

- compromising pupils' welfare but in a way that does not meet the threshold for child protection intervention.

The school hopes that in many cases staff will be able to raise any concerns with their line manager. They may be able to resolve a concern quickly and effectively. However where the matter is more serious or if you feel your line manager has not addressed your concern you should contact the headteacher or Chair of Governors.

Reasons for blowing the whistle

Staff will naturally be reticent to report a concern about the conduct of a colleague. However, each individual must take responsibility for ensuring that pupils are fairly treated. If poor practice is allowed to continue unchecked, it could escalate with serious consequences.

Your action not only protects pupils, but also deters any suggestion that you have colluded with poor practice that you knew was occurring but chose to ignore.

Whistleblowing can also support the member of staff who is the subject of the concern. Their conduct may result from inexperience or lack of training that can be addressed by the school, or they may be under stress and be relieved when their conduct is questioned.

Staff who deliberately fail pupils and show no remorse or desire to improve are unlikely to welcome being exposed, but their conduct has to be confronted for the sake of the pupils and the reputation of the whole school.

Barriers to whistle blowing

You may worry that you have insufficient evidence to raise a concern, that you will set in train an unstoppable chain of events, that there will be adverse repercussions for your career, that you may suffer harassment or victimisation, or that your suspicion or concern might be totally misplaced.

These concerns are entirely understandable but you can be reassured that whistleblowing procedures addresses these issues.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects employees from reprisals for public interest whistleblowing. Your union, a solicitor or the local authority legal services can provide you with information about your legal position.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All concerns are treated in confidence and, as far as possible, your identity will not be revealed if that is your wish. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if, as a result of an investigation, you are required to provide a witness statement or attend a court hearing.

The school will fully support you and do all it can to protect you from any harassment or adverse repercussions that may arise from whistleblowing.

Raising concerns anonymously

You are encouraged to put your name to your allegations so that steps can be taken to prevent reprisals, and allegations can be fully investigated.

Anonymous allegations are more difficult to investigate as it is not possible to establish whether an allegation is made in good faith or is malicious. It is impossible to come for further to you for information and keep you informed. For these reasons, anonymous allegations will not normally be investigated..

Allegations which are not found to be proven on investigation

Allegations that prove to be deliberately fabricated and malicious will be dealt with through staff disciplinary procedures. However, no action will be taken against any member of staff who raises a genuine concern that proves to be unfounded.

Reporting procedure

- It may help if you write down, for your own benefit, what you have observed or heard that is causing alarm. One useful way to decide whether your concern should be reported, is to consider whether you would want the conduct of this member of staff to continue unchecked if your own child or another young family member was involved.
- You may raise your concern verbally or in writing. **You should report your concern directly to the headteacher.**
- **If the headteacher is the subject of your concern, speak to the chair of governors.**

- A friend, colleague or union representative may accompany you to the meeting if you wish.
- Ensure the head or chair informs you of their proposed action and sets a date for a second meeting.
- Timescales will depend on the complexity of the initial inquiry but the case should not be allowed to stall and you should receive initial feedback within 10 working days. The timescale for subsequent feedback should then be agreed.
- Ask for clarification about confidentiality and ensure you have your wishes regarding the protection of your identity recorded.

Process and Outcome

- The headteacher or chair will make enquiries to establish the facts of the matter and whether poor practice or inappropriate conduct has occurred.
- Members of the school community, including governors, may be asked to provide information or advice.
- External advice, for example, from legal or human resources or children's services may be sought.
- A written record of the conduct, established facts and outcome of the inquiry will be kept.
- The whistleblower will be kept informed of the progress of the inquiry.

The outcome of the inquiry will be one of the following:

- No poor practice or wrongdoing is established and the case is closed
- The concern has some substance and the subject of the concern will receive advice and support from the headteacher to improve practice
- Poor practice or wrongdoing is established and disciplinary proceedings are initiated
- The concern is more serious and an investigation is initiated. This investigation may involve the local authority's legal team, children's social care or the police.

If, at any stage in the process, there is reason to believe that a child is at risk of significant harm, children's social care will be immediately involved.

Further action

If you raise a concern and you are dissatisfied with the way it is managed, or the outcome, you may contact the governing body or local authority for advice.

Alternatively you can seek advice from your union or professional association, a solicitor, the police or children's social care or contact one of the organisations below.

[NSPCC](#)

[SpeakUp PublicConcernAtWork](#)