

# Reporting Professional Concerns – SH10

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## 1. Introduction

The school is committed to the highest standards of openness and expect employees to come forward and voice appropriate concerns. This policy covers major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. All concerns will be treated in confidence and your identity will not be revealed without your prior agreement and you will not be penalised for making a disclosure. This policy is informed by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Employment Rights Act 1996, which provide specific rights for workers who disclose information about alleged wrong doings in certain specific circumstances.

In other organisations this policy is called a Whistleblowing Policy.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees and contractors and their staff working in the school including Governors, volunteers, agency staff, builders and drivers; also providers of works, services and supplies including external contractors and those providing services under a contract with the school. This policy is designed to provide a clear framework to report practice concerns in good faith without fear of reprisal or victimisation.

## 3. Purpose

This policy aims to:

- Encourage employees to feel confident to make a disclosure of concerns about issues that fall under this policy.
- Provide avenues for employees to raise those concerns.
- Reassure employees that they will be protected from being penalised or suffering detriment.

- Ensure that employees receive a response to their concerns and that they are made aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied with the response.

#### **4. What kind of concerns should be disclosed under this policy?**

This policy covers any serious concerns about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of school employees. This could be something that makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards; is against the school's policy; falls below established standards of practice or amounts to improper conduct.

Concerns that fall within this policy could include:

- A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed;
- A person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligations;
- Disclosures relating to miscarriages of justice;
- Health and Safety risks, including risks to the public;
- Damage to the environment;
- Something that is against school policies;
- Information relating to any of the above categories is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed

Please note that the Grievance Procedure exists to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to any matter concerning your own employment that you are unhappy about, in particular, matters that fall outside this policy. This policy should not be used to raise individual grievances, and nor is it to be a mechanism for challenging decisions, practices and policies with which you disagree.

#### **5. Confidentiality**

You are encouraged to put your name to allegations as anonymous concerns are much less powerful. However, anonymous concerns will still be considered by the school management and governing body. Harassment or victimisation will not be tolerated and appropriate action will be taken to protect you.

#### **6. How do I raise a concern and make a disclosure?**

You can do so either orally or in writing to the Headteacher. In cases where your concerns relate to the Headteacher, you can approach the Chair of Governors.

You will be expected to give as much background and history as you can and, whilst you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate that you are making the disclosure in good faith and that you reasonably believe that the information disclosed, and any allegation contained within it, are substantially true. None of this policy will apply unless you act in good faith.

## 7. How will the school respond?

In order to protect all individuals concerned with any disclosure, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate. Where appropriate the matters raised may be:

- Investigated by management, internal audit or through disciplinary procedures;
- Be referred to the police, and or, other appropriate agencies;
- Be referred to the external auditor;
- The subject of an independent enquiry;
- Resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

Within 10 working days the Headteacher or appropriate representative of the Governing body will:

- Acknowledge receipt of your concern;
- Indicate how it is proposed to deal with the matter and give an estimate of how long this will take;
- Provide information on staff support mechanisms.

Should there be a need for investigating officers to meet with you, this can be off site if you wish and you can be accompanied by a trade union representative or someone else who can support and advise you. All parties will be expected to maintain strict confidentiality.

The school will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern, and if you are required to give evidence at a criminal or disciplinary hearing the school will support you.

Whilst the school must act in confidence in relation to any disclosure made under this policy, it will use its best endeavours to inform you of the outcome of any investigation wherever possible.

## 8. Making an external disclosure

It is hoped that this policy gives you the reassurance to raise matters within the school but, as a last resort, you may wish to raise matters externally. If you were to disclose the matter externally you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information and you must ensure that you satisfy the following five conditions in order to gain the specific rights under this policy or the relevant legislation referred to above:

- You must have made the qualifying disclosure in good faith,
- You must reasonably believe that the information disclosed, and any allegation contained in it, is substantially true,
- The disclosure must not have been made for the purposes of personal gain,
- One of the following three conditions must apply:-
  - a) At the time of the disclosure, you reasonably believe that you will be subjected to detriment by raising the concern with the employer or a prescribed person (listed in the Schedule to the Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 1999),
  - b) Where there is no prescribed person in relation to the relevant failure, you reasonably believe that it is likely that evidence will be concealed or destroyed if you make a disclosure to your employer,

- c) You have previously made a disclosure of substantially the same information to either your employer or a prescribed person,
- In all of the circumstances of the case, it is reasonable to make the disclosure.

## 9. Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Staffing Committee every two years.

Approved by:	Claire Cordell – Chair of Governors
Date of approval:	20 <sup>th</sup> November 2017
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