

Whistleblowing Policy

Purpose

My Online Schooling is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with this commitment, the school encourages staff with serious concerns about the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns. This also applies to concerns about the activities of teachers, senior leadership, office staff and external organisations in their dealings with the school.

This policy:

- provides the basis on which staff can raise any such concerns they may have, and receive feedback on action taken
- allows staff to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the school's response
- gives protection from reprisals or victimisation for 'whistle blowing' in good faith

There are existing procedures in place to enable staff to raise grievances about their own employment. This policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of individual grievances. The concern may be about something that:

- is unlawful
- is against the school's policies
- amounts to improper conduct
- seems likely to harm somebody or the environment
- represents a cover-up of these sorts of issues

This policy applies to all staff.

Harassment or Victimisation

The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisals from those responsible for the malpractice. The school will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take all possible measures to protect staff who raise concerns in good faith.

Confidentiality

The school will protect the identity of staff who raise concerns and do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated, however, that the investigation may reveal the source of the information, and statements made by the staff who raised the issue may be required as part of the evidence. The school encourages staff to put their name to allegations made. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the school. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:

- the seriousness of the issue raised
- the credibility of the concern
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources
- untrue allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the staff member. However, if staff make allegations that are malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action against them is likely.

How to Raise a Concern

The earlier staff express their concern, the easier it is to take action. As a first step a staff member should raise any concerns with their line manager or the Headteacher. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice.

Concerns are better raised in writing. This should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why the staff member is concerned about the situation. A staff member who does not feel able to put their concerns in writing can telephone or meet with the appropriate manager. Staff may invite a colleague or professional association to raise the matter in conjunction with them.

How Will the School Respond?

The action taken by the school will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised, may for example, be investigated internally or be referred to the Police.

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. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. Within two weeks of a concern being received, the staff member who raised the issue will receive written acknowledgement:

- that the concern has been raised
- indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter
- where possible, giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- telling the staff member whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not

The amount of contact between the investigators considering the issue and the staff member who has raised the issue will depend on the nature of the matter raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from the staff member.

When any meeting is arranged with the staff member, they will be given the right to be accompanied by a representative or colleague who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates. The school accepts that staff need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Therefore, subject to legal or contractual constraints, staff will receive information about the outcomes of any investigations.

Taking the Issue Further

This policy is intended to provide staff with an avenue to raise relevant concerns within the school. It is hoped that staff will be satisfied with the action taken as a result.

If a staff member is not satisfied and feels it is right to take the matter outside the school, the following are possible contact points:

- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- the police

If a staff member does take the matter outside of school, they must make sure that they do not disclose otherwise confidential information.

- END OF POLICY -