

THE JUNIOR AND SENIOR SCHOOL WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Whistleblowing - A Reporting Policy and Procedure for Teachers and School Based Employees

1 Introduction

1.1 Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within their place of work, but do not express their concerns for fear of reprisal or repercussions.

1.2 By helping to create a culture of honesty and openness, irregularities can be identified and addressed quickly.

1.3 This policy and procedure sets out the application of the above within The Junior & Senior School, enabling employees to raise serious concerns, rather than overlooking them or raising them outside the school.

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all Teachers and School Based Employees.

3 Aims

3.1 The aims of this policy and procedure are to:

- encourage employees to question and act upon concerns about practice and conduct and feel confident in raising those concerns;
- provide avenues for employees to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- ensure employees receive a response and allow them to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the Principal, Headteachers and/or Board of Governor's response to the concerns expressed;
- reassure employees that they will be protected from reprisals or retribution for any disclosure that they have made in good faith including an employee acting in the capacity of friend, colleague or trade union representative at any meeting in connection with the disclosure;
- ensure that employees about whom concerns are raised are treated fairly and supported appropriately.

3.2 There are already procedures in place to enable employees to raise a grievance relating to their own employment. This Policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of the grievance procedure. This concern may be about something that is:

- unlawful, including financial or fraudulent malpractice such as embezzlement, bribery,

- corruption, dishonesty etc;
- against The Junior & Senior School or the Junior & Senior School's policies;
 - against established standards of practice;
 - improper conduct.

4 The Policy

4.1 The Principal, Headteachers and Board of Governors are committed to the highest possible standards of probity and accountability within The Junior & Senior School.

4.2 In line with that commitment, employees who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work are encouraged to come forward and voice those concerns in line with the procedure outlined in section 5 below.

4.3 The Board of Governors will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation and will take appropriate action in order to protect employees who raise concerns in good faith.

4.4 Pursuant to the above, all initial enquiries will be made on a sensitive and confidential basis to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

4.5 Notwithstanding 4.4 above, if a situation arises where a concern cannot be resolved without revealing the identity of an employee, this matter will be discussed further with the person concerned, before any further action is taken.

4.6 Employees are encouraged to put their name to their allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously will be considered at the discretion of the Board of Governors as outlined in paragraph 6 below.

4.7 If any meeting is held in connection with the concerns raised by an employee, they are entitled to be accompanied by a friend, colleague or trade union representative (but not in the capacity of a practising lawyer). They also have the right to request that this meeting is held away from their place of work.

4.8 The Board of Governors will protect itself and its employees from false and malicious expressions of concern by taking disciplinary action where appropriate. If however, an allegation is made in good faith and not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken.

5 The Procedure

5.1 How to raise a concern

5.1.1 An employee should inform the Principal or Headteacher immediately if they have any concerns that they consider fall within the scope of section 3.2.

5.1.2 If they believe however, that senior staff are involved in the matter of concern, an approach may be made directly to the Board of Governors.

5.1.3 Concerns may be raised verbally but it is more effective if employees put their concerns in writing. Any written report should set out:

- the background and history of the concern (giving relevant names, dates and places

where possible);

- the reason why the employee is particularly concerned about the situation;
- details of any other possible witnesses to the concern.

5.1.4 Although an employee is not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate to the person they contact that there are sufficient and reasonable grounds for their concern and that they are therefore making the disclosure 'in good faith'.

5.1.5 Employees may contact the HR Officer or their trade union representative for moral support and guidance in how to raise a concern.

5.2 How the School will respond

5.2.1 The person that the employee notifies has a responsibility to ensure that the concern is taken seriously and that they act swiftly to tackle any impropriety.

5.2.2 To protect the employee, an initial investigation will be carried out by the Principal to decide whether a full investigation is appropriate, and if so which form it should take.

5.2.3 If urgent action is required (eg suspension), this will be taken before any investigation is carried out.

5.2.4 It should also be noted that some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for a full investigation.

5.2.5 Within **10 working days** of a concern being raised, the Headteacher or the Board of Governors will write to the employee:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- indicating how they propose to deal with the matter;
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response.

5.2.6 If the decision is that no investigation is to take place, the full reasons for this will be explained to the employee.

5.2.7 If it is not possible for initial inquiries to be completed within ten working days, this will be explained in the acknowledgement letter.

5.2.8 Depending on the nature of the matters raised and the clarity of information provided, it may be necessary to ask the employee for further information relating to the concern.

5.2.9 The Board of Governors will take steps to minimise any difficulties that the employee may experience as a result of raising a concern and take all reasonable action to support and protect them from, for example, victimisation.

5.2.10 The Board of Governors recognise that the employee needs to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Subject to legal constraints, they will be advised of ongoing progress and kept informed about the outcomes of any investigation and remedial action proposed.

6 Safeguards

6.1 Harassment or Victimisation

6.1.1 It is recognised that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. The Board of Governors will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action in order to protect employees who raise a concern in good faith.

6.2 Confidentiality

6.2.1 As far as possible, the Board of Governors will protect the identity of any employee who raises a concern and does not want their name to be disclosed. However, it must be appreciated that any investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by the person reporting the concern may be required as evidence.

6.2.2 Employees may also be required to give evidence at a disciplinary hearing or to act as a witness at court.

6.3 Anonymity

6.3.1 Concerns expressed anonymously will be considered at the discretion of the Board of Governors. In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account include:

- the likelihood of obtaining the necessary information;
- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the specific nature of the complaint;
- the credibility of the concern;
- the school's best interests.

6.3.2 Employees also have to bear in mind that if they raise a complaint anonymously it may not be possible to provide a response/feedback.

6.4 Support

6.4.1 The member of staff against whom an allegation has been made will be kept informed of the progress of any investigation. Consideration will also be given to what other support may be appropriate for them.

6.4.2 If allegations are proved to be unfounded and/or no action is to be taken, consideration will be given as to what support may be appropriate for the member of staff.

7 Monitoring and Review

7.1 The Board of Governors has a responsibility for registering the nature of all concerns raised and recording the outcome.

7.2 This policy and procedure will be kept under periodic review and any amendments will be subject to full consultation with trade union representatives.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Reviewed September 2019