



Oakridge Primary School

Whistle Blowing Policy

Adopted: Chair of Leadership and Management Committee: Next review date:	January 2020 Mr Rust September 2021
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Introduction

Oakridge Primary School is committed to operating with honesty and integrity. We expect all colleagues to operate on this basis and to adhere to the policies, procedures and code of conduct. Fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing will not be tolerated.

The aim of this policy is to encourage colleagues to report suspected wrongdoing internally rather than externally as a first resort. Any concerns raised under this policy will be treated seriously and dealt with confidentially.

Any colleague raising a concern under this policy will not be treated less favourably for raising concerns as outlined in this procedure. This means that any colleague who raises a concern under this policy will not be subjected to a detriment nor will they be dismissed for doing so.

This policy applies to employees of Oakridge Primary School, referred to in this policy as colleagues including agency workers, trainees or anyone working on a casual basis.

The policy and procedure applies to all colleagues, regardless of length of service, but does not form part of the contract of employment and can be varied from time to time.

The law in question is the Public Interest Disclosure Act, which came into force in 1999. Although not strictly required by the Act, the School's internal procedures give effect to it. The School believes that having internal procedures is in everyone's interest.

What is whistleblowing?

Chapter 2 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 states that schools should have clear whistleblowing procedures, which reflect the principles in Sir Robert Francis' Freedom to Speak Up Review and are suitably referenced in staff training and codes of conduct, and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed. However Whistleblowing is when a worker reports suspected wrongdoing at work.

For example

- A criminal offence; and/or
- A miscarriage of justice; and/or
- Damage to the environment; and/or
- Breach of a legal obligation; and/or
- A danger to health and safety; and/or
- A deliberate concealment of any of the above

A colleague can report things that are not right, are illegal or if anyone at work is neglecting their duties, including:

- someone's health and safety is in danger
- damage to the environment
- a criminal offence
- the company isn't obeying the law (like not having the right insurance)
- covering up wrongdoing.

A colleague who has a reasonable belief that a wrongdoing has or may be committed and raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above, is a whistleblower and is protected under this policy.

The Council will, at its discretion, consider disclosures that are made anonymously, although such disclosures are inevitably much less powerful. The Council will also treat every disclosure in confidence, and only reveal the identity of the person making it if absolutely necessary (e.g. if required in connection with legal action).

Rights of the Whistleblower

All colleagues are encouraged to use this policy to raise genuine concerns and will not be treated less favourably for doing so, even if they are mistaken in their belief.

Any colleague who raises a concern under this policy will not be subjected to a detriment nor will they be dismissed for doing so. Any colleague who believes that they have been subjected to a detriment for raising a complaint should raise the matter with the Headteacher.

Victimisation of a whistleblower by any other colleague for raising a concern under this policy will in itself constitute a disciplinary offence.

Where the School believes that a colleague has knowingly made a false allegation or acted maliciously, the colleague will be subject to disciplinary action, which may include dismissal for gross misconduct.

This policy does not deal with any complaints relating to a colleague's own treatment at work or own contract of employment. Those matters should be raised under the Grievance procedure or the Bullying and Harassment procedure, as appropriate. An exception to this will be when the matter of concern arises from the colleague's own treatment at work that is arising from the whistleblowing matter they have raised previously.

Making a Whistleblowing Complaint

To make a whistleblowing complaint the whistleblower has to meet certain conditions.

If the disclosure is made to the School, it must be in the public interest and the person making the complaint (“the whistleblower”) has a reasonable suspicion that the alleged malpractice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.

If the disclosure is made to a regulatory body then as well as satisfying the conditions required for disclosure to the School, the whistleblower must also honestly and reasonably believe that the information they provide and any allegations contained in it are substantially true.

For example, a colleague will be eligible for protection if:

- they honestly think what they’re reporting is true
- they think they’re telling the right person
- they believe that their disclosure is in the public interest

If the disclosure is made to other external bodies then as well as satisfying the conditions required for disclosure to the School, in all circumstances of the case it must be reasonable for them to make the complaint. Further the whistleblower must:

- reasonably believe that they would be victimised if they raised the matter internally or to a regulatory body or,
- reasonably believe that evidence is likely to be concealed or destroyed or,
- have already raised the concern with the council and/or relevant regulatory body and,
- reasonably believe that the information they provide and any allegations contained therein are substantially true.

If the disclosure is made to other external bodies and is of an "exceptionally serious" nature – which in a local government setting could include, say, the alleged abuse of children or vulnerable adults in an authority's care or corruption then the whistleblower will not be required to:

- have raised the matter concerned internally first
- believe that they will be subject to a detriment for raising the disclosure internally
- believe that the evidence is likely to be concealed or destroyed.

A colleague who wants to raise a wrongdoing should in the first instance inform Mr Paul Fisher, Headteacher. If the issue is about the Headteacher, contact should be made with Mr Andrew Felton, Chair of Governors.

The initial contact can be by telephone or in writing and, if the latter, should be in a sealed envelope addressed to the officer concerned and marked: 'PIDA – Strictly Private and Confidential'. E-mail cannot be guaranteed as a secure medium and it is not recommended as a channel for reporting issues related to this policy.

The Contact Officer who has received a disclosure will:

- acknowledge its receipt, in writing, within 5 working days;

- seek further information if required, which may include a personal interview, at which the colleague (whistleblower) can be accompanied by a representative of their trade union or professional association, or by a fellow employee;
- when the precise nature of the alleged wrongdoing is established, refer the disclosure to the Chair of Governors. In liaison with the Chair of Governors keep the individual informed regarding the progress and in all cases (subject to legal constraints) provide details of the outcome of any investigation.

On receipt of a disclosure from the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will determine what further action, if any, is needed, which may comprise:

- internal investigation
- report to the Police
- report to external audit
- independent enquiry
- any combination of the above

The Chair of Governors will also ensure that the Headteacher is advised of progress and outcome.

If the colleague does not reasonably believe that appropriate action has been taken in relation to their concern, then they may raise it externally to the prescribed regulator. The charity, Public Concern at Work, can advise the colleague about raising the concern externally. This will include advising who the appropriate prescribed regulator is. The website for Public Concern at Work is <http://www.pcaw.co.uk>