

Wentworth Primary School

Whistle Blowing Policy

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October 2024**

**Reviewed: October 2024
Next Review: October 2025**

Achieving Happily



Whistle Blowing Policy

Introduction

Wentworth Primary School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability in all of its activities. It also expects a high standard of conduct and integrity from employees. Any employee who has a serious concern about any aspect of the School's work or the actions of any of its employees should voice their concerns through established internal channels, without fear of harassment or victimisation.

The policy will be circulated to all staff and the Governing Board on an annual basis and seek their declaration they have read and understood the Whistleblowing Policy.

Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Encourage employees to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon their concerns
- Provide avenues for employees to raise these concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- Allow employees to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the School's response
- Reassure them that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith in accordance with the procedure

This policy applies to all employees including those working on a temporary or casual basis.

This procedure is separate from the school Complaints procedures and any Child Protection issues should be reported according to the specific guidelines laid out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

This Policy is intended to cover reasonably serious concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. That concern may be about any of the following:

- A Criminal activity that has been, is being or is likely to be committed
- Fraud and Corruption
- Unauthorised use of public funds
- A failure to comply with a legal obligation
- A health and safety risk relating to any individual
- A miscarriage of justice
- A damage to the environment
- Actions that are contrary to any of the School's policies
- Actions or behaviour that falls below established standards of practice
- Abuse and welfare of students or staff

- Harassment or victimisation of students or staff
- Any actions or concerns regarding practice that could result in a financial loss to the School
- The deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above matters
- Other unethical conduct

Confidentiality

All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal an employee's identity if this is their wish. However, in certain cases, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality if they are required to come forward as a witness.

Anonymous allegations

Whenever possible employees should put their name to their allegation as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful than those that are attributed to a named individual. However, anonymous allegations will be considered and investigated at our discretion.

In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the concern
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from reliable sources.

Untrue allegations

If an employee makes an allegation in good faith that is not subsequently confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken. Disciplinary action will only be taken against individuals who knowingly make false, malicious or vexatious allegations.

How to raise a concern

Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing. A concern raised in writing should:

- Set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible
- The employee must give a reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation.

The earlier a concern is raised the easier it is to take action. Although employees are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, they need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for their concern.

A trade union or professional association may raise a matter on behalf of an employee.

When a concern is raised verbally, a note of the meeting will be taken which all parties must sign as representing a true record of the meeting including details of the concern raised.

Whenever possible you should raise your concern with a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the Head Teacher or the Chair of Governors.

The action taken by the School will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised could:

- Be investigated internally by the Head teacher and/or the Chair of Governors through the disciplinary or other internal process
- Be referred to the police
- Be referred to the External Auditor.
- Be referred to the Local safeguarding Team/LADO

In order to protect individuals, 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. If urgent action is required it will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

Within 10 working days, the person appointed to investigate will write to the employee who raised the concern:

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received
- Indicating how the School propose to deal with the matter
- Giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Informing the employee if any initial enquiries have been made
- Whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not.

Contact

The amount of contact between the people considering the issues and the employee will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought.

Attending meetings

When any meeting is arranged the employee will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a workplace colleague who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

Support

The School will take steps to minimise any difficulties the employee may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if the employee is required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the School will advise or arrange for them to have advice about the procedure.

The School will not tolerate harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take action to protect individuals who raise a concern.

The School accepts that employees need to be assured that concerns will be properly addressed and, subject to legal constraints, will provide information about the outcomes of any investigations.

How the matter can be taken further

This procedure is intended to provide individuals with an avenue to raise concerns within the School. If you are not satisfied, and feel it is right to take the matter further, the following are possible contact points to seek from one of the following:

- Public Concern at Work 020 7404 6609
- Audit Commission 020 7630 1019
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- A solicitor
- Local Safeguarding Team

If a matter is taken outside the school, the employee must take all reasonable steps to ensure that confidential or privileged information is not disclosed. If in doubt, check with the contacts listed above.