

Haslingfield School Whistleblowing Policy and Guidance

October 2013

Haslingfield Endowed Primary School

Whistle Blowing Policy

(This policy is to be read in conjunction with the School Complaints and Safeguarding policies. This policy is intended to compliment these policies and should only be followed when the nature of the concern falls outside the School Complaints procedure.)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Our school is honest, open and built on trust and respect for all. We are committed to creating a school that sets the highest standards possible for staff welfare, probity and accountability. This policy makes clear that all members of staff must speak up if they have a concern and it sets out how any individual member of staff can do so without fear of future retribution or victimisation. We understand that some members of staff may be reluctant to speak up out of loyalty to their colleagues or because they feel their views are not sufficiently important. They may also feel that their voice will not be listened to. If any member of staff feels that a colleague is not acting appropriately or not following the proper procedures they are encouraged to raise their concerns in the proper way. The reason this is important is that it may prevent a problem getting worse, reduce risks to others, and stop other members of staff being involved, and ultimately helping uphold the standards necessary for any good school to function well. It is the responsibility of all staff to report the actions of others they believe may be wrong.
- 1.2 We will take any matter of concern raised by a member of staff seriously. We want to build a community where all staff can raise any issue or matter that concern them without fear. We want to create an ethos where all members of our school community feel confident that their views will be considered and that they can raise any matter of concern without hesitation. No one should be concerned that if they raise an issue they may be harassed or victimised in future for bringing the matter to light. This policy sets out the procedure to be followed by anyone who wishes to raise a concern and explains the process that will be employed to manage such situations.
- 1.3 This policy is in line with the regulations set out in the Public Interest Disclosure Act of 1998.

2 Aims and objectives

- 2.1 This policy will:
 - explain how the school will respond to any matters of concern raised by a member of staff under the terms of this policy;
 - encourage staff to bring forward any issue of concern and so give confidence to staff that in raising issues they are supported by the school;
 - reassure staff that if they do act in good faith they will not suffer any form of victimisation as a result.

3 Scope of this policy

- 3.1 This policy applies to any colleague working in the school be they employed or working voluntarily. It will also apply to colleagues who are employed on a short-term contract or an ad hoc basis. It is anticipated that this policy will be followed if a member of staff has a concern about the actions of another member of staff. Such concerns might relate to the actions of one or more staff that might:
- put children or staff at risk;
 - not meet the standards of behaviour normally expected of staff working with children;
 - be against the law;
 - mean the school is not complying with the rules and policies regarding contract standing orders or other financial matters;
 - legally compromise the school either financially or otherwise;
 - damage the school grounds, buildings or contents.

4 The school process in responding to a concern raised under this policy

- 4.1 If a member of staff has a concern that falls within the terms of this policy their first action should be to raise the matter with their immediate line manager. If the concern involves the line manager, the member of staff would need to discuss the matter with the headteacher. If the concern involves the headteacher the member of staff should talk initially to the chair of governors. If the concerns are about the governing body the matter should be raised with the appropriate officer of the Local Authority.
- 4.2 A member of staff raising a concern might find it helpful (although this is not essential) to detail their concerns in writing. They may also like to alert their professional association to the matter as they may wish to represent or support their member through the process.
- 4.3 How the school responds to the concerns raised will depend on the nature of the concerns. In some instances a senior member of staff will investigate the matter and report their findings to the headteacher who may be able to resolve the matter taking the appropriate action. In other instances it may be necessary to carry out an investigation using an external officer appointed by the school. For example, the school may ask the Local Authority to provide an experienced officer to look into the matter. In some instances it may need professional investigation from a finance officer or auditor. In very serious cases the police may be contacted to investigate.
- 4.4 A senior member of staff or governor will respond to your initial concerns within a period of ten days. They will tell you how they intend to address the matter. If the school requires further information from you they will inform you of the date of any meeting giving at least five day's notice. You would always be able to bring a friend or adviser with you at any meeting. The school will support whistle blowers throughout the process to mitigate any difficult situations that may arise in school.
- 4.5 Whatever the outcome of any investigation no action will be taken against you even if the claims are found to be untrue. Action would possibly be taken if a malicious and unfounded allegation was made with no basis. In this case disciplinary action may be considered.

5 Confidentiality and anonymous allegations

- 5.1 The school will treat all concerns with sensitivity and, if necessary, in confidence. However, in some instances it would not be possible for the whistle blower to have their anonymity protected. For example, if an allegation related to the safety of a child the evidence may need to involve police and social services. The school will use its discretion in deciding whether to investigate information given to managers from an anonymous source.

6 Appeal procedures

6.1 Governors will decide on the response of the school in each appeal case referred to them. They will act appropriately and fairly in all cases. They will seek professional advice if necessary before reaching a final decision. The decision of the school governing body is final on all such matters. If a member of staff remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the process they would need to pursue the matter on an individual basis.

6.2 If a member of staff chooses not to follow this procedure then they are deemed to be acting outside of this policy and its terms will no longer apply. If their allegations are found to be malicious and unfounded they will be liable for disciplinary action.

7 Monitoring and review

7.1 This policy will be monitored by the chair of governors. The chair will report to the governing body on an annual basis the number of complaints that have been received under this policy. They will also explain what, if any, action the school should take as a result of any concerns raised.

7.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if necessary.

This policy was ratified by the Governing Body on

Signed Chair of Governors

Date of next review

Child Protection Whistle Blowing Policy: Guidance for Employees



This guidance is written for staff working with children and young people working in education settings and should be read in conjunction with Cambridgeshire LA's whistleblowing procedures (2009)

Staff must acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior management and/or relevant agencies. Although this can be difficult this is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express your concerns out of a feeling that this would be disloyal to colleagues or you may fear harassment or victimisation; these feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember it is often the most vulnerable children or young person who is targeted. These children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare.

Don't think what if I'm wrong - think what if I'm right

Reasons for whistle blowing

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself

What stops people from whistle blowing

- Starting a chain of events which spirals
- Disrupting the work or project
- Fear of getting it wrong
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers
- Fear of not being believed

How to raise a concern

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. The earlier concern is expressed the easier and sooner it is possible for action to be taken
- Try to pinpoint what practice is concerning you and why
- Approach someone you trust and who you will believe will respond
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don't let matters rest
- Ideally you should put your concerns in writing
- A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern

It is important to remember that often it is the most vulnerable groups that are targeted by individuals who may seek to abuse those in their care. Therefore, these groups rely on responsible individuals to protect them and to safeguard their welfare.

Cambridgeshire County Council's Whistleblowing procedures 2009

What happens next

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries
- Your employer has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and as raised in good faith
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence

Self reporting

Staff have a responsibility to report any relevant changes of circumstance to their employer. These include any criminal investigations, convictions or warnings they may become the subject of and/or if their own children become involved in any child protection related concern

There also may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty maybe a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their line manager so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children

Further advice and support

Full details of Cambridgeshire County Council's whistleblowing procedures can be obtained from the HR Department of the County Council.

It is recognised that whistle blowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from your line manager, your HR provider and/or your professional or trade union

"Absolutely without fail - challenge poor practice or performance. If you ignore or collude with poor practice it makes it harder to sound the alarm when things go wrong". With acknowledgement to Sounding the Alarm - Barnardos