



We can and we will
GLEBE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Confidential Reporting / Whistleblowing Policy

Mission Statement

At Glebe School we believe in an ethos that values the whole child. We strive to enable all children to achieve their full potential academically, socially and emotionally.

Aims

- To ensure that employees and volunteers feel confident in raising serious public interest concerns by providing clear avenues through which those concerns can be raised.
- To provide reassurance that those who raise legitimate public interest concerns will not be victimised or punished.
- To ensure that the method of raising such concerns is made clear and to provide for an appropriate response.

Introduction

At Glebe, there may be times when staff have concerns about what is happening at work. Usually these concerns are easily resolved. However, when they are about unlawful conduct, financial malpractice, health and safety risks to the public or to other employees, damage to the environment, possible fraud or corruption, sexual or physical abuse of clients or any other unethical conduct, it can be difficult to know what to do.

Some staff may be worried about raising such issues or may want to keep the concerns to themselves, perhaps feeling it's none of their business or that it's only a suspicion. To some, it may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to the school. There may be times when staff have decided to say something but find that they have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next. Some staff may also have concerns over harassment or victimisation should they report an issue.

The school is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. It expects that its employees who have serious concerns about anything that is happening in the school, to come forward and raise those concerns. The school, however, recognises that employees need to be supported and have confidence that any concerns will be treated appropriately. The purpose of this policy, which is based on the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, is to enable staff to raise concerns about such malpractice at an early stage and in the right way. The

school would rather that the matter is raised when it is just a concern, rather than wait for proof.

The policy is intended to apply not only to employees but also to contractors working for the school on school premises. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the school.

This policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the organisation itself are at risk. If staff have concerns about their employment with the council this should be raised through the council's Grievance Procedure. The council also has policies to cover the situation where you personally are the victim of bullying or harassment.

Definition of Whistle-Blowing

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is "in the public interest". Examples of whistle-blowing include (but aren't limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Pupils' or staffs' health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest
- Damage to the environment

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the school count as whistle-blowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistle-blowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

When staff have a concern they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures.

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) has:

- [Further guidance](#) on the difference between a whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure which can be found at <https://protect-advice.org.uk/what-is-the-difference-between-raising-a-grievance-and-whistleblowing/>
- A free and confidential advice line <https://protect-advice.org.uk/advice-line/>

What issues are covered by whistleblowing?

Malpractice and wrongdoing will include the following, but the precise coverage and terms used can vary:

- Any unlawful act, whether criminal or a breach of civil law .
- Maladministration, as defined by the Local Government Ombudsman.
- Breach of any statutory Code of Practice.
- Breach of, or failure to implement or comply with Financial Regulations or standing orders.

Confidential Reporting/ Whistleblowing Policy

- Any failure to comply with appropriate professional standards.
- Fraud, corruption or dishonesty.
- Actions which are likely to cause physical danger to any person, or to give rise to a risk of significant damage to property.
- Loss of income to the school.
- Abuse of power, or the use of the school's powers and authority for any unauthorised or ulterior purpose.
- Discrimination in employment or the provision of education.
- Any other matter that staff consider they cannot raise by any other procedure.

Safeguards

1. The school is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees. The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If staff raise a genuine concern under this policy, they should have nothing to fear because they will be doing their duty to the school and its community.

2. The school will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect staff when concerns are raised in good faith.

3. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence, or be influenced by, any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect members of staff.

4. All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal an individual's identity if they so wish. At the appropriate time, however, that individual may need to come forward as a witness.

5. Whenever possible, names should be put to your allegation as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful. The school will exercise discretion in considering anonymous allegations if the issue raised is sufficiently serious - e.g. involving individual or public safety or corruption, waste or other impropriety - and credible and there is a likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.

6. If an allegation is made in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the individual who raised concerns. If, however, an allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken.

How to raise a concern

1. It is normally expected that concerns will be raised in the first instance with an individual's immediate line manager (a member of SLT) or the Head Teacher. However, if the matter is of an extremely sensitive or serious nature, or it is believed that management could be involved, the chair of governors should be approached. The line of contact is as follows:

- Line Manager/ SLT
- Head Teacher
- The Chair of Governors- Mr John Buckingham - 01895 462385 (school office)

Confidential Reporting/ Whistleblowing Policy

These officers will also be able to provide further advice/guidance on how to pursue matters of concern:

- The Monitoring Officer - 01895 250617 (ext. 0617)
- Director of Finance - 01895 556074 (ext. 6074)
- Head of Democratic Services - 01895 250636 (ext. 0636)
- The Chief Executive - 01895 250569 (ext. 0569)
- Concerns can also be addressed to the confidential hotline number on 0800 389 8313 or emailed to fraud@hillingsdon.gov.uk

2. Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. When making a written report, it is suggested that details of the background and history are given, with relevant dates and specific reasons for concern about the situation.

3. Individuals will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for their concern.

4. Individuals may be accompanied at any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns they have raised by their trade union or other representative, or a friend.

Safeguarding children and young people

Separate to the obligations under this policy, all employees have a duty to report concerns about the safety and welfare of pupils/students

Concerns about any of the following should be reported to the school's designated senior person for Child Protection (DSL):

- physical abuse of a pupil/student
- sexual abuse of a pupil/student
- emotional abuse of a pupil/student
- neglect of a pupil/student
- an intimate or improper relationship between an adult and a pupil/student

The reason for the concern may be the actions of a colleague (including a more senior colleague), a governor, another pupil/student or someone outside the school. Whatever the reason, concerns must be reported. Failure to report a Child Protection related allegation will be in itself, a disciplinary matter.

How the school will respond

1. Once a concern has been raised, it will be looked into to assess, initially, what action should be taken.

2. As appropriate, matters raised may:

- be investigated by management/SLT, the Monitoring Officer, internal audit, through the disciplinary process.
- be referred to the police.
- be referred to the external auditor.
- form the subject of an independent investigation.

3. In deciding how to deal with the concern raised, the overriding principle which the school will have in mind is the public interest. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures e.g. child protection, will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

4. **Within ten working days** of a concern being raised, the person, with whom you have raised the concern, will write to you acknowledging that the concern has been received and indicating how the school proposes to deal with the matter. If there is an ongoing investigation, the person responsible for that investigation will provide you with updates on how the matter is progressing and inform you of the outcome of the investigation, subject to any legal constraints.

5. The school will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the school will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.

Outcome of the Investigation

Once the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the investigating person(s) will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether or not any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority or police.

They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.

Beyond the immediate actions, the head teacher, governors and other staff, if necessary, will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

External contacts

While the school hopes this policy gives the reassurance needed to raise such matters internally, it recognises that there may be circumstances where reports to outside bodies, such as the District Auditor or the police, are required. Trade Unions or Citizens Advice Bureau will be able to advise on such an option.

Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff grievance policy
- Complaints procedure
- Safeguarding policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedures

Reviewed: January 2020

Review Date: January 2021