



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Members of staff may be the first to spot anything that is seriously wrong within the school. However, they might not say anything because they think this would be disloyal, or they might be worried that their suspicions are not justified. They may also be worried that they or someone else may be victimised.

Members of the public (for example, parents of students) may also share some of these concerns. That is why we have produced this whistleblowing policy to help staff and the public to contact us with their concerns.

We are committed to being open, honest and accountable. Our Standards Committee has a role to play in promoting high standards. They and the Corporate Director of Children's Services want anyone who has serious concerns about any aspect of our schools' work to raise those concerns.

This policy aims to make sure that if you want to raise any concern, you can do so with confidence and without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

What types of action are covered by the policy?

The policy is intended to deal with serious or sensitive concerns about wrong doings such as the following:

- Fraud or corruption
- Children or students being mistreated
- Unauthorised use of public money
- An unlawful act
- Any danger to health and safety
- The environment being damaged (for example, by pollution)
- A person abusing their position or any unauthorised use or for personal gain
- A person deliberately not keeping to a Council policy, an official code of practice, any law or regulation, or any procedures agreed by the local education authority or governing body
- A person failing to meet appropriate professional standards
- A person being discriminated against because of their race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin, disability, age, sex, sexuality, class or home life

This policy applies to all staff working in schools and educational establishments as well as contractors working on school premises (for example, agency staff, builders and drivers). It also covers suppliers and people who provide services to the school.

These procedures build upon our complaints procedure and other reporting procedures applying to some departments. Head teachers and site managers are responsible for making all relevant people aware of these procedures.



What is not covered?

You cannot use this policy to deal with serious or sensitive matters that are covered by other procedures. Such procedures include the following.

- Staff's complaints about their employment. These complaints are dealt with through our Grievance Procedure.
- Customers' complaints about our services. These complaints are dealt with through our Complaints Procedure.

Also, you cannot use this policy to raise issues that have already been settled through other procedures.

If staff are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy, you should seek advice from the HR Manager or Head teacher.

Protecting you

If your allegation is true, you have nothing to fear. But we understand that deciding to blow the whistle is not easy.

If you raise a concern which you believe is true, we will take appropriate action under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 to protect you from any harassment, victimisation or bullying.

We will keep your concerns confidential if this is what you want. In this case we will not reveal your name or position without your permission or unless we have to do so by law. We would explain this at the time you raise a concern so you can decide whether or not to proceed.

If you work for the school, you should also know that any allegation you make will not influence, or be influenced by, any unrelated disciplinary action against you or any redundancy procedures that may affect you.

Anonymous allegations

Because we will protect you (as explained above), we encourage you to give your name when you make an allegation. Concerns raised anonymously tend to be far less effective and if, for example, we do not have enough information, we may not be able to investigate the matter at all.

If you feel that you cannot give your name, Head Teacher will decide whether or not to consider the matter. This will depend on:

- The seriousness of the matter;
- Whether your concern is believable; and
- Whether we can carry out an investigation based on the information you have provided.



Untrue allegations

If you make an allegation which you believe is true, but it is not confirmed by our investigation, we will not take any action against you.

However, if you make an allegation which you know is untrue, we will take appropriate disciplinary or legal action against you.

How to raise a concern?

You should first raise your concern, in writing, with your line manager or HR Manager. (This will depend on the seriousness and sensitivity of the matter and who is suspected of the wrongdoing.) If the relevant manager cannot deal with the matter, he or she will refer the concern to the Head Teacher.

However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that the HR Manager or your Line Manager has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact one of the following:

- The Head teacher
- A Governor with responsibility for Whistleblowing matters.

Help for you

You may want to discuss your concern with a friend or colleague. You may then find it easier to raise a concern if others share the same experiences or concerns.

Your trade union representative can give you general support and advice, or act for you if this would help. This could be useful, particularly if you do not want the HR Manager or Head teacher to know who you are.

We will encourage the trade unions to support any member of staff who raises a concern with them.

If your concern is about a governor, raise your concern by writing to the Corporate Director of Children's Services:

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Town Hall
Barking Essex
IG11 7LU.

Write 'Private and confidential' on your envelope.



How we respond to your concerns

The way we deal with the concern will depend on what it involves.

We will first make enquiries to decide whether we should carry out an investigation and, if so, how we should go about it. Throughout all our enquiries and any investigation, our main concern will be to put the interests of the public first.

Your concern may be investigated by senior management, or through the disciplinary process, or we may refer it to:

- The Police
- Other agencies (for example, if it involves the abuse of children or vulnerable adults it may be referred to the Executive Director of Health and Social Care);
- An independent investigator

If your concern or allegation can be handled under any other procedure or policy, we will pass it on to the relevant person and let you know.

We may be able to settle some concerns without carrying out an investigation but by taking action agreed by you.

If we need to take urgent action, we will do this before carrying out any investigation.

Within 10 working days of you raising a concern, the officer dealing with the matter will:

- Acknowledge that we have received your concern;
- Explain how we will handle the matter; and
- Tell you what support is available to you

It is difficult to set further timescales as they depend on the nature of the allegation and the type of investigation we need to carry out.

The amount of contact you have with the HR Manager will depend on the nature of your concern, the potential difficulties involved, and how clear the information you have given is.

If you need to have a meeting, you can be accompanied by a friend or a representative from a trade union or professional association. Meetings with the person investigating the matter will normally take place in his or her office but can be arranged elsewhere, but not in your home unless there are exceptional circumstances.

We will take steps to reduce any difficulties you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you need to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, we will arrange for you to get advice on the procedure.

We will usually give you feedback on the progress and outcome of any investigation

Valence Primary School



Independent advice

You can get independent advice or support from an organisation called Public Concern at Work. Their address is:

Suite 301
16 Baldwins Gardens London
EC1N 7RJ.
Phone: 020 7404 6609
E-mail: whistle@pcaw.co.uk
Website www.pcaw.co.uk