Beaconsfield Primary School

'Shining a Light on Learning'

B - Belief
P - Perseverance
S - Success

Whistleblowing Policy

Date approved: April 2025
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WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

1. Introduction

The Governors and head teacher are committed to delivering a high quality education service to pupils and expect high standards from their staff and contractors. In order to maintain these high standards a culture of openness and accountability is vitally important. The aims of this policy are threefold: -

- to encourage staff to raise concerns about malpractice within the school without fear of reprisal
- to reassure staff that concerns will be taken seriously
- to provide information about how to raise concerns and explain how the Governors may respond.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all school employees, agency staff, contractors and volunteers engaged by the school. There is a separate procedure for pupils and parents to raise concerns about school related issues.

3. What is whistleblowing?

In practical terms, whistleblowing occurs when a concern is raised about danger or illegality that affects others. As the person blowing the whistle you will not necessarily be directly affected by the danger or illegality. Consequently you will not necessarily have a personal interest in the outcome of any investigation into your concerns. This is different from a complaint or grievance. If you make a complaint or lodge a grievance, you are saying that you personally have been poorly treated. This poor treatment could involve a breach of your individual employment rights or bullying and you are entitled to seek redress for yourself.

4. Blowing the Whistle on Malpractice

Malpractice covers a wide range of concerns. The types of activity that should be disclosed include but are not limited to the following: -

- the physical, emotional or sexual abuse of pupils or staff
- unauthorised use of school funds and/or financial maladministration
- fraud and corruption
- failure to comply with legal obligations
- endangering of an individual's health and safety
- damage to the environment
- a criminal offence
- failure to follow financial and contract procedure rules
- showing undue favour to a contractor or a job applicant
- miscarriages of justice
- deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above

- concerns about the professional practice or competence of colleagues, other members of staff or other workers

Staff should raise their concerns with the head teacher, or deputy head teacher or their immediate line manager. The earlier a concern is raised the easier it will be to take action. You the whistleblower are a witness to events not the investigator. You do not need to wait for compelling evidence of malpractice before raising concerns but you must have reasonable grounds for your suspicion.

When reporting a concern you should provide as much information and detail as possible. In particular you should provide the full names of the people involved or who know about what is happening, including the names of those involved, dates of events and any relevant documentation. This will help the investigator to focus on the main issues quickly.

There will be some cases where it is not appropriate for you to raise concerns with your head teacher/manager, for example where you suspect your head teacher/manager already knows about the malpractice or where you suspect your head teacher/manager may be involved. In those cases, you should report your concerns to the governors. You may alternatively raise the matter if for whatever reason you are unable to raise your concerns with one of the above with one of the following:

Head of Schools Human Resources, Mark Nelson: 020 8825 9478
Assistant Director of Audit and Investigations, Mike Pinder: 0208 8255792

Ealing Council also operates a Fraud Hotline: 0800 328 6453 (free call) where information can be left anonymously or to fraudreferrals@ealing.gov.uk

Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. You will be advised whether an investigation takes place or not. When making a decision the head teacher will consider whether continuing with an investigation is in the public interest.

5. Advice and Support

The School recognises that staff may wish to seek advice and support from their professional association or trade union before blowing the whistle and you are strongly advised to do so. Employees may also wish to seek advice from Protect an organisation which is entirely separate from the School or the Council. Protect have lawyers who provide confidential advice, free of charge, to people concerned about wrongdoing at work. They can be contacted by telephone on 020 3117 2520 or via their website Contact our Advice Line - Protect - Speak up stop harm (protect-advice.org.uk)

Whistleblowers who consider that they have been victimised as a result of whistleblowing should make a formal complaint to their employer immediately giving details of the way in which they believe they have been subject to detriment and their reasons for thinking that the detriment might be connected with their disclosure. You might also wish to contact the Schools Human Resources Consultancy Team on 020 8825 9478.You may also choose to raise the matter with:

- Professional Association/Trade Union

- Councillor
- Member of Parliament
- Legal Adviser

It is the responsibility of your employer to ensure that you are not victimised as a result of whistleblowing.

6. Confidentiality

The school understands that you may be reluctant to come forward with information about the wrongdoing of a colleague or manager or indeed at all. As such, the school recognises that whistleblowers may wish to raise concerns in confidence. If you (the whistleblower) make a request for the matter to be kept confidential then your identity will not be revealed without discussing the matter with you first.

7. Anonymous Allegations

It is recognised that the purpose of a whistleblowing policy is to allow people to make protected disclosure with the protection being against any reprisals or victimisation for disclosures made honestly and in good faith. It is very difficult for some people to come forward and make a disclosure and the prospect of having to identify yourself can make the action of whistleblowing all the more daunting. You are encouraged to give your name when raising concerns. A concern expressed anonymously is much less powerful and is often more difficult to investigate and can lack credibility. The decision whether to investigate an anonymous allegation will be made by the head teacher and/ or the chair of governors and/or Ealing Council. When making this decision they will take into account the seriousness of the issues raised, the credibility of what is being said and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.

8. Protection for the Whistleblower

All concerns raised under this procedure will be treated seriously and a decision made about whether or not an investigation is appropriate. Depending upon the nature of the matter it may be referred to the external auditor or the police. The person to whom you reported your concern will be responsible for keeping you informed about the progress of the investigation and the action, which has been taken, although you may not be told the outcome. In some cases the investigation may result in criminal or disciplinary proceedings. If this happens you may be invited to give a written statement or give evidence at a hearing. The head teacher and governors will support you in this process and ensure that you are clear about what will happen.

9. Allegations not made in the public interest

Concerns that are raised frivolously, maliciously, or where they are known to be untrue may result in disciplinary action or, in the case of agency staff, the termination of the agency contract. In the case of contractors, the matter will be reported to the Council's relevant Contract Manager so that a decision can be made about the appropriate action to take.

10. Blowing the Whistle outside the School

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to raise concerns outside the School to the appropriate 'prescribed regulator'. This should only be done where you are raising a genuine concern in the public interest and where you believe the information is true, i.e. more than just suspicion. You are advised to discuss your concerns with a legal advisor, professional association, trade union or PCAW (see above) before reporting them outside the School.

Examples of prescribed regulators are set out below:

- Ofsted (whistleblowing helpline): 0300 123 3155 or whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
- National Audit Office : 020 7798 7999 or visit website on this link Whistleblowing - National Audit Office (NAO)
- Information Commissioner : 0303 123 1113 or visit website on this link Protected disclosures to the ICO – Whistleblowing | ICO
- Environment Agency: 03708 506 506
- Health and Safety Executive : 0300 0031 647 or visit website on this link Tell us about a health and safety issue - Contact HSE

As a last resort and provided it is appropriate in all the circumstances, you may choose to raise your concern outside the school to someone other than a prescribed regulator e.g. the police or your MP. Provided the disclosure is reasonable in all the circumstances and is not made for personal gain, the preconditions are that you:

- Reasonably believed that you would be victimised if you raised the matter initially within the school
- Reasonably believed that the matter would be "covered up" if you raised the matter internally within the school or the council and there is no prescribed regulator or
- You have already raised the matter internally or with a prescribed regulator.

You may also choose to raise the matter with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), (07890940241), email asv@ealing.gov.uk if the matter concerns a potential safeguarding/child abuse issue.

11. Complaints, Grievances & Members

This policy should not be confused with other policies that already exist for dealing with complaints/ grievances (see paragraph 3). For example, complaints about the quality of service delivery should be addressed through complaints procedures. Employees who are aggrieved about their own employment situation should consider whether to use the grievance procedure.

12. Reviews and Operation of this Policy

The Governors have overall responsibility for the operation of this policy. (This policy has to be formally adopted by the Governors and may be reviewed from time to time.)