

Gladesmore Community School

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY [F5.5]

This whistleblowing policy enables suspicions of malpractice to be raised confidentially inside and, if necessary, outside the School. It also describes how the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, aims to protect the whistleblowers from victimisation. This Policy is aligned with the Haringey Council whistleblowing policy and is appropriately adapted for school use.

1. Introduction

Whistleblowing is a procedure whereby employees can disclose suspicions of any wrong doings such as fraud, malpractice, safeguarding matters, breach of any health and safety law, or any other illegal act, either on the part of fellow employees.

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act, an employee has the right not to suffer detriment or be unfairly dismissed as a result of speaking out about crime, fraud, miscarriages of justice or other malpractices.

The school's policy on whistleblowing applies to all staff, contractors and trainees.

Staff working at the school have an important role in helping to promote good practice while providing a service to the pupils. Staff are likely to notice when something is going seriously wrong. This whistleblowing policy aims to ensure that serious concerns are properly raised and addressed in the work place.

We must ensure that the policy takes account of Equal Opportunities.

In order for a matter to receive consideration:

- (a) the disclosure should be made in good faith
- (b) the information disclosed, and any allegation contained in it, should be accurate
- (c) the disclosure should not be made for reasons of personal gain
- (d) the relevant concern is of an exceptionally serious nature.

2. How to identify relevant matters of concern

A relevant concern may be something that you consider:

- is unlawful
- amounts to improper conduct
- involves pupils or staff being put in danger
- involves funds being embezzled or fraud.

This whistleblowing policy is intended to cover concerns that might fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:

- conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
- health and safety risks, including risks to pupils and other employees
- safeguarding matters
- the unauthorised use of public funds
- possible fraud and corruption
- damage to the environment
- sexual or physical abuse of clients
- other unethical conduct.

3. How to raise concerns

Where you have concerns about malpractice raise it as may be most appropriate with:

- (a) your line manager
- (b) the headteacher
- (c) designated safeguarding officer
- (d) chair of the governing body

For everyone involved in the whistleblowing process, it is important to deal with concerns quickly, discreetly and properly to make the process efficient, fair and effective.

4. How the School will respond

Where appropriate, the matters raised may be investigated by senior management, governors, Haringey LADO, internal audit investigations unit, HR Personnel, the Police.

The responsible person will inform the member of staff to

- acknowledge their complaint
- indicate how they propose to deal with the matter raised
- provide individuals with information on staff support mechanisms.

The initial investigation will establish whether or not a concern is justified. Further investigations should aim to be completed within six weeks, but extensions will be

granted when necessary. The aim of these timescales is to ensure that all cases of whistleblowing are dealt with as soon as possible.

5. Investigating the case

Following an allegation, where appropriate an independent and impartial manager will be involved in the investigation.

Managers will make sure that the investigation is carried out as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

Once an investigation begins, every effort will be made to bring it to an early conclusion.

Investigations under the whistleblowing policy follow the same process as the Disciplinary Code of Practice for investigating cases of misconduct/gross misconduct.

An investigation may conclude that, potentially, there has been a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Rules. In these circumstances management would invoke the disciplinary process.

The amount of contact between the staff considering the allegation and the whistleblower will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided.

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.

The School accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, we will inform you of the progress and outcomes of any investigation.

6. How the matter can be taken further

This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the School to raise concerns. The School hopes you will be satisfied with the steps taken. If you are not, and if you feel it is right to take the matter outside the School, the following are possible contact points:

- Haringey Local Authority
- Trade Union
- Police.

If you do take the matter outside the School, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information. Check with the headteacher and/or safeguarding officer, if you have concerns about confidentiality.

7. Protecting whistleblowers' confidentiality

The School will seek to protect your identity when you raise a concern and do not want your name to be disclosed. However, during the investigation, the source of the information may be revealed and you may be required to provide a statement.

8. Anonymous allegations

The policy encourages individuals to put their name to allegations they make. However, it is understood that some people may wish to remain anonymous. Concerns expressed in this way are much less powerful, but will be considered, at the discretion of the School. In exercising this discretion, the seriousness of the issues raised and the credibility of the concern will be taken into account.

9. Untrue allegations

If you make an allegation, which you think genuine, but is not proven, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you maliciously raise an unfounded concern, then disciplinary action may be taken against you.

10. Victimisation

The School will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.

If you do receive reprisals from those responsible for the malpractice or any other member of staff, the School will take the matter very seriously and where appropriate take disciplinary action.

11. Contracting organisations

These arrangements will be extended, with appropriate variations, to staff of contracting organisations. Such arrangements will be carefully confined to those areas of activity relating specifically to the contractor's relationship with Gladesmore Community School, and should not extend to their internal arrangements.