

Whistleblowing Policy

The Beeches Primary School



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1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Encourage individuals affected to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and that their confidentiality will be respected
- Ensure that staff acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior management and/or relevant agencies. Although this can be difficult, it is imperative as the welfare of children may be at risk
- Let all staff in the school know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing
- Set clear procedures for how the school will respond to such concerns
- Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistle-blowing concern
- Assure staff that they will not be victimised for raising a legitimate concern through the steps set out in the policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken (though vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue)

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the school in any capacity, including self-employed contractors or agencies who provide services on a personal basis

2. Legislation

There is a requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place.

This policy has been written in line with [government guidance on whistle-blowing](#). We also take into account the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

This guidance is intended for all staff working with children in educational settings, and should be read in conjunction with Peterborough LA's whistleblowing procedures.

3. Definition of whistle-blowing

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

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption

- Pupils' or staff health and safety are being put in danger
- Poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school's Safeguarding regime which are not in line with the Child Protection Policy
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures (eg inappropriate use of grants, tampering with tender documents to advantage a particular party, manipulation of accounting records and finances, including fraudulent claims, decision making for personal gain).
- 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.

Reasons for whistle-blowing:

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

Not all concerns about the school count as whistle-blowing. For example, personal staff grievances, such as bullying or harassment, do not usually constitute 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
- A free and confidential [advice line](#)

4. Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing concern

4.1 When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples in Section 3 when deciding whether their concern falls within the scope of whistle-blowing. Consider whether the incident(s) were illegal, breached statutory or school procedures, put people (including children) in danger or were an attempt to cover any such activity up. You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. The earlier the concern is expressed, the easier and sooner it is possible for action to be taken. Try to pinpoint what practice is concerning you and identify the reasons why.

4.2 Who to report to

School-based staff should report their concern to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead only. If the concern is about the Deputy Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Headteacher. If the concern is about the Headteacher, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Chair of Governors. If the concern is about the Headteacher & Chair of Governors, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Local Authority following their Whistleblowing Policies.

4.3 How to raise the concern

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest they may have in the matter. **Where Safeguarding is involved, staff should consider using Confide, the One Team Logic system.** 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

5. Procedure for responding to a whistle-blowing concern

5.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the Headteacher (or person as listed in 4.2), referred to from here as the 'recipient' – they will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union or professional association representative
- Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting, and record the information. If it becomes apparent that the concern is not of a whistle-blowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure
- Reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected from any unfair treatment, harassment or victimization or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern. If the concern is found to be malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action may be taken (see section 6 of this policy)
- Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there is:
 - The recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving a representative from the Governing Body, if appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. In others, they may need to report the matter to the police
 - The person who raised the concern should be informed of how the matter is being investigated and an estimated timeframe for when they will be informed of the next steps

5.2 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 Headteacher and Board of 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. Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don't let matters rest. Keep discussing and raising the concern until satisfied or consider other channels of reporting.

6. Malicious or vexatious allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there may be a potential issue. If an allegation is made in good faith, but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

7. Escalating concerns beyond the school

The school encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with section 4 of this policy, but recognises that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included [here](#).

The Protect advice line, linked to in section 3 of this policy, can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.

8. Approval

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

These procedures have been agreed by the Board of Governors, who will approve them whenever reviewed.

9. Links with other policies / support

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff grievance procedure including collective grievance
- Complaints procedures policy
- Safeguarding policy
- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns about child protection failures internally or have concerns about how their school is handling a particular issue. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: help@nspcc.org.uk

It is recognised that whistleblowing 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".

Sounding the Alarm - Barnardo's