Henry Chichele Primary School

Whistle Blowing Policy
October 2024

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Distribution:

All staff and Governors
All Parents
School website

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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
- Let all staff know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the school
- 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 trust in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

Legislation

This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as government guidance on whistle blowing. We also take into account the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Definition of Whistleblowing

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 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
- A free and confidential advice line

Procedure for staff to raise a whistle blowing concern

When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples above when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle blowing nature. Consider whether the incident/s was illegal, breached statutory or trust procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

Who to report to

Staff 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.

chairofgovernors@henrychichele.northants.sch.uk

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 in the matter.

Procedures for responding to a whistle-blowing concern

Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the headteacher they will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person raising the concern may be joined by a professional association representative
- Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting and record the information. If it becomes apparent the concern is not of a whistleblowing nature, the headteacher should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure
- Reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected from any unfair treatment 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

Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation.

If there is:

- The headteacher should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the chair of governors if appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. In other cases, 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

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 chair of governors, 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.

Malicious or Vexatious Allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an 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 trust will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

Escalating Concerns

The school encourages staff to raise their concerns internally 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 can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.

Approval

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years. These procedures have been agreed by the board of governors, who will approve them whenever reviewed.

Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff grievance policy
- Complaints procedure
- Child protection policy