



WHISTLE-BLOWING AT WORK POLICY

March 2016

COMMITTEE:

DATE:

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CONTENTS:

INTRODUCTION

OUR ASSURANCE TO YOU

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

HOW WE WILL HANDLE THE MATTER

INDEPENDENT ADVICE

EXTERNAL CONTACTS

POLICY MONITORING

RELATED DOCUMENTS

INTRODUCTION:

All of us at one time or another has concerns about what is happening at work. Usually these are easily resolved. However, when the concern feels serious because it is about a possible fraud, danger posed to others or malpractice that might affect others or the organisation itself, it can be difficult to know what to do. Such concerns might be to do with:

- Safeguarding
- Actions that are an offence or breach of the law
- A miscarriage or likely miscarriage of justice
- Unauthorised use of public funds or action that is contrary to the school's financial procedures or contract regulations
- Damage to the environment
- A health and safety risk to the public or to other employees
- Physical, sexual abuse or neglect of service users or employees
- Other unethical conduct

You may be worried about raising such a concern and may think it best to keep it to yourself, perhaps feeling it's none of your business or that it's only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to the organisation. You may decide to say something but find that you have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

The Governing Body is committed to running the organisation in the best way possible and to do so we need your help. We have introduced this policy to reassure you that it is safe and acceptable to speak up and to enable you to raise any concern you may have about malpractice at an early stage and in the right way. Rather than wait for proof, we would prefer you to raise the matter if it is still a concern.

This policy applies to all those who work for us; whether on casual hours, working fulltime or part-time, employed through an agency or as a volunteer are a contractor or sub-contractor who is providing a service to the school. If you have a whistle-blowing concern, please let us know.

If something is troubling you that you think we should know about or look into, please use this policy. If, however, you wish to make a complaint about your employment or how you have been treated, please use the grievance policy which you can access on the school's website or get a copy from the Clerk to Governors.

If you have a concern about financial misconduct or fraud, please see our Finance Policy. The Whistle-blowing Policy is primarily for concerns where the interest of others or the organisation itself are at risk.

If in doubt – raise it!

OUR ASSURANCES TO YOU

Governors are fully committed to this policy. If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of retribution as a result. Provided you are acting in good faith, it does not matter if you are mistaken. Of course we do not extend this assurance to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know is untrue.

Your confidence

With these assurances, we hope you will raise your concern openly. However, we recognise that there may be circumstances when you would prefer to speak to someone in confidence first. If this is the case, please say so at the outset. If you ask us not to disclose your identity, we will not do so without your consent unless required by law. You should understand that there may be times when we are unable to resolve a concern without revealing your identity, for example where your personal evidence is essential. In such cases, we will discuss with you whether and how the matter can best proceed.

Please remember that if you do not tell us who you are it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter. We will not be able to protect your position or to give you feedback. Accordingly you should not assume we can provide the assurances we offer in the same way if you report a concern anonymously.

If you are unsure about raising a concern you can get independent advice from your Union.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

Please remember that you do not need to have firm evidence of malpractice before raising a concern. However we do ask that you explain as fully as you can the information or circumstances that gave rise to your concern.

Step one:

If you have a concern about malpractice, we hope that you will feel able to raise it first with the headteacher. This may be done verbally or in writing.

Step two:

If you feel unable to raise the matter with the headteacher, for whatever reason, please raise the matter with any of the following people:

Chair of Governors, (via the clerk to the governing body) clerk@oakfieldcepri.iow.sch.uk
Policy & Organisational Officer, Rosie Barnard, rbarnard@oakfieldcepri.iow.sch.uk

Local Authority designated Officer (LADO) if the issue relates to a safeguarding matter
paul.barnard@iow.gov.uk

If you want to raise the matter in confidence, please say so at the outset so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Step three:

If these channels have been followed and you still have concerns, or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, please contact:

Hampshire County Council - Steve Crocker, Interim Director for Children's Services – Tel: 0300 555 1384
Diocese of Portsmouth – Jeff Williams, Diocesan Director of Education – Tel: (02392) 899680

HOW WE WILL HANDLE THE MATTER

Once you have told us of your concern, we will assess it and consider what action may be appropriate. This may involve an informal review, an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. We will tell you who will be handling the matter, how you can contact them, and what further assistance we may need from you. If you ask, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it. If we have misunderstood the concern or there is any information missing please let us know.

When you raise the concern it will be helpful to know how you think the matter might best be resolved. If you have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset. If we think your concern falls more properly within our grievance, protection from harassment and bullying policies or other relevant procedure, we will let you know.

Whenever possible, we will give you feedback on the outcome of any investigation. Please note, however, that we may not be able to tell you about the precise actions we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence we owe to another person.

Whilst we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that might wish, we will handle the matter fairly and properly. By using this policy you will help us to achieve this.

INDEPENDENT ADVICE

If you are unsure whether to use this policy or you want confidential advice at any stage you may contact your Union (where applicable) for advice.

EXTERNAL CONTACTS

While we hope this policy gives you the reassurance you need to raise your concern internally with us, we recognise that there may be circumstances where you can properly report a concern to an outside body. In fact, we would rather you raised a matter with the appropriate regulator- such as:

- The District Auditor
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations such as Department for Education
- The Police
- The Local Government Ombudsman
- LADO
- Or your Union (if applicable)

POLICY MONITORING

The Governing Body is responsible for the monitoring of this policy and will review its use at least once every two years.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Performance Development Policy
Single Equality Policy
Complaints Policy
Grievance Policy
Schools Financial Value Standard – Annual Statement