

Headcorn Primary School

Whistleblowing Policy



The Governing Body has the following policy for dealing with the reporting of serious concerns for all staff. The policy was based on KCC model guidance and approved by the Finance & Personnel Committee in consultation with staff. This version supersedes any previous Whistleblowing Policy. It will be reviewed every 3 years, or earlier if needed. Any amendments will require the approval of the Finance & Personnel Committee.

Approval Body	Finance & Personnel Committee
Date of Approval	9 th January 2015
Date Due for Review	January 2018 (3 years)
Signed - Chair of Finance & Personnel Committee	J Keeler
Signed – Headteacher	J Barker

Headcorn Primary School Policy and Procedure for Whistleblowing

Introduction

At Headcorn Primary School we are committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability and we encourage staff and others working with us to raise any concerns about any aspect of our work to come forward and voice those concerns. In some instances, concerns may need to be expressed on a confidential basis. Staff must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior leadership and/or relevant agencies. This procedure has been based on KCC guidance for whistleblowing (as at Oct 2012) and encourages staff to raise serious concerns, without fear of reprisal or victimisation, internally within school and KCC (Kent County Council) rather than over-looking a problem or raising the matter outside.

It applies to all staff, agency workers and supply staff and those contractors working on the premises, for example, cleaners, builders and drivers. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with KCC in their own premises.

Don't think what if I'm wrong – think what if I'm right

Other Complaints Procedures

This procedure is separate from the school Complaints Procedures and other statutory reporting procedures. Child Protection issues should be reported according to the specific guidelines laid out in that policy. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice under this procedure will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affects an individual.

Behaviour that should cause concern:-

- conduct which is, has been or is likely to be an offence or breach of law
- conduct that has occurred, is occurring or is likely occur the result of which the school or KCC fails to comply with a legal obligation. For example unauthorised use of public funds, possible fraud and corruption, verbal, sexual or physical abuse, or other unethical conduct
- discrimination of any kind and waste/frivolous expenditure
- disclosures related to past, current or likely matters of conduct
- past, current or likely health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- past, current or likely damage to the environment

Reasons for whistleblowing

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

What stops people from whistleblowing

- Starting a chain of events which spirals.
- Disrupting the work or project.
- Fear of getting it wrong.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers.
- Fear of not being believed.

How to raise a concern

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can with your line manager. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken.
- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why.
- If your concern is about your immediate line manager approach the Headteacher. If your concern is about the Headteacher, or you feel you need to take it to someone outside the school, contact the Local Education Officer for your area, or the Chair of Governors.
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don't let matters rest.
- Ideally you should put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates and places where you can.
- 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.

What happens next

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- Your employer has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation.
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence.

Confidentiality

All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if this is your wish. However, in certain cases, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality if you are required to come forward as a witness.

Anonymous Allegations

Whenever possible you should put your name to your allegation as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful than those that are attributed to a named individual. However anonymous allegations will be considered and investigated at the school's discretion. In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

Self reporting

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with the Headteacher so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned. Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most instances, this cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

Further advice, support and contact details

It is recognised that whistleblowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from the Headteacher and Chair of Governors.

Further advice is available from:

Area Education Officer: Mr Jared Nehra - 03000 412209

Independent Helpline - Public concern at work (020 7040 6609)