

<b>Name of Policy:</b> Confidential Reporting	<b>Version/Last Review Date:</b> September 2019 (V3)
<b>Statutory documents linked to policy:</b> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation</a> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/data-protection-act-2018">https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/data-protection-act-2018</a>	<b>Previous review date:</b> September 2017 (v2) September 2015 (V1)
<b>Other Policies linked to this policy:</b> Whistle Blowing All GDPR policies	<b>Next Review Date:</b> September 2021
<b>Governor Committee Responsible</b>	People & Resource Management

All children will achieve their full potential, with holistic support, whilst enjoying and driving their own learning, gaining self-respect and self-belief. Our classroom extends to rich, exciting environments within the forest, the beach, the city and the community as a whole.

## Introduction:

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within their school. However, they may not say anything because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the school's managers. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. It may be easier for them to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

The school is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. So we expect employees, and others we deal with, who have serious concerns about the school's work to come forward and voice them.

It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

**This policy document makes it clear that you can raise concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. This Confidential Reporting Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within a school rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside. These rules are important but underlying the rules is the commitment of the school's governing body that the school should have and encourage a culture of improvement and openness, and not control and blame.**

The policy applies to all employees, volunteers and those contractors working on school premises, for example, agency staff, builders and drivers. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the school in their own premises.

These procedures do not stand-alone and are in addition to, for example, the Grievance Policy and other personnel procedures as well as the complaints and other relevant reporting procedures agreed by governors. Where other procedures are activated simultaneously, a clear agreement will be reached between the responsible officer who is investigating the concern and the individual making the report about the separate procedures, with agreed programmes for each and an agreement as to whether or not information can be shared for the purposes of each procedure.

This policy has been discussed with the relevant trade unions and professional organisations and has their support.

## Aims and Scope of this Policy:

There are existing procedures in place for you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment. The Confidential Reporting Policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside those procedures. These include:

- safeguarding issues
- conduct which is a criminal offence or a breach of law
- disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- damage to the environment
- the unauthorised use of public funds
- possible fraud and corruption
- sexual, physical or verbal abuse
- other unethical conduct.

Thus, any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of staff employed by the school or others acting on behalf of it can be reported under the Confidential Reporting Policy. This may be about something that:

- makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe the school subscribes to
- is against the School's Standing Orders and policies

- amounts to improper conduct.

You do not have to refer to the Confidential Reporting Policy to have an issue or complaint dealt with under the Policy.

This policy aims to:

- encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
- provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied
- reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure in good faith.

### **Safeguards: Harassment or Victimisation:**

The governing body is committed to good practice and high standards, and wants to be supportive of employees.

The governing body recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If you believe what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and those for whom you are providing a service.

The governing body will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence, or be influenced by, disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect you.

### **Confidentiality:**

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness, or agree to your identity being disclosed, or the details of your concerns shared with others.

This policy encourages you to put your name to your concerns whenever possible.

In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:

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

### **Untrue Allegations:**

If you express a concern in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you.

If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

### **How to Raise a Concern:**

As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager or their senior manager. You may also feel able to approach a member of the governing body. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the misconduct. If you believe that senior managers are involved you should contact the Chair of governors. If this does not allay your concerns you can contact someone outside your school, or use the Anti-Fraud Hotline.

Within ten working days of a concern being raised with the person dealing with your issue they:

- will write to you
- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- indicating how we propose to deal with the matter;
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made;
- supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms; and
- telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

### **How the Matter Can Be Taken Further:**

This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the school to raise concerns. However, the following are possible contact points:

- the external auditor;
- your trade union;
- your local Citizens' Advice Bureau;
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations;
- a relevant voluntary organisation;
- the police; and
- the local Ward Councillor (where appropriate).