

Westacre Infant School

Whistleblowing Policy



Westacre Infant School is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and expects all staff to maintain high standards in accordance with their contractual obligations and the school's policies and procedures.

Aims of Policy

- To encourage staff to report suspected wrong doing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate and that their confidentiality will be respected
- To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns
- To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals even if they turn out to be a mistake

This policy takes account of the Whistleblowing Arrangements Code of Practice issued by the British Standards Institute and Public Concern at work.

This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and is not intended to have contractual effect. It is provided for guidance to all members of staff at the school and the school reserves the right to amend its content at any time.

This policy reflects the school's current practices and applies to all individuals working at all levels of the organisation including Governors, Head teacher, members of the Senior Leadership team, employees, consultants, trainees, part-time and fixed term workers, casual and agency staff who are advised to familiarise themselves with its content

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- Criminal activity
- Child protection/safeguarding concerns
- Miscarriages of justice
- Danger to health and safety
- Damage to the environment
- Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements
- Financial fraud or mismanagement
- Negligence
- Breach of the school's internal policies and procedures including in Code of Conduct
- Conduct likely to damage the school's reputation
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- The deliberate concealment of any of the above matters

A 'Whistleblower' is a person who raises genuine concern in good faith relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the school's activities, you should report it under this policy.

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to staffs own personal circumstances such as the way you have been treated at work.

If staff are uncertain whether something is within the scope of their policy, they should seek advice from the Headteacher and if the matter is in relation to an alleged wrongdoing by the Headteacher then staff should seek advice of the Chair of Governors.

Concerns against Governors

If a concern against a Governor is received the this will be treated in the same way as any other concern. The concern will be raised by the Headteacher with the Chair of Governors who will decide how it should be dealt with.

If the concern is against the chair of Governors, then the Headteacher will decide in consultation with another Governor how it should be dealt with.

External Disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrong doing in the workplace.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for staff to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will rarely be appropriate to inform the media. The independent whistleblowing charity Public Concern at Work operate a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern.

Investigation and Outcome

Once a member of staff has raised a concern the school will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. The school will inform the whistleblower of the outcome of its assessment. The member of staff raising the concern may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

Raising a Whistleblowing Concern

The school hopes that in many cases staff will be able to raise any concerns with the Headteacher, speaking to them in person or putting the matter in writing if they prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving a concern quickly and effectively

The Headteacher will arrange a meeting with the whistleblower as soon as practicable to discuss their concern. They will record sufficient information to allow the matter to be investigated. In some cases, it will not be possible to maintain the confidentiality of the concern and the Headteacher should explain this to the employee. In such instances the employee will have the choice of either withdrawing or agreeing to their identity becoming known to enable the concern to be effectively dealt with.

Staff may bring a colleague or trade union representative to any meeting under this policy who must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

The school will take notes and produce a written summary of the concern raised and provide the whistleblower with a copy as soon as practicable after the meeting and an indication of how it proposed to deal with the matter.

Confidentiality

The school hopes staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if a member of staff wants to raise their concerns confidentially the school will endeavour to keep their identity secret in so far as it is possible to do so following this policy and procedure. If it is necessary for anyone investigating that member of staffs concern to know the whistleblowers identity the school will discuss this with the member of staff first.

The school does not encourage staff to make disclosure anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult if the school cannot obtain further information. It is also more difficult to establish if the allegations are credible.

If an individual misuses the policy by making malicious or repeated complaints against colleagues this could give rise to action under the school's Disciplinary procedure. If the Headteacher knows or has a suspicion that an employee comes into this category then they will take advice from the Chair of Governors.

The school will aim to keep the member of staff informed of the progress of the investigation. The member of staff is required to treat any information about the investigation as strictly confidential.

If the school concludes that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously, in bad faith or for personal gain the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action under the schools Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

There are no rights of appeal against any decisions taken under this procedure although the Headteacher can refer the case to the Chair of Governors for review.

Protection and Support for Whistleblowers

It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. The school aims to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistake.

Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing. Staff are invited to comment to the Headteacher on this policy and suggest ways in which it could be improved.

Safeguarding

If a member of staff suspects there is a serious safeguarding issue that they feel the Headteacher is not taking seriously or that they believe there is a serious safeguarding issue involving the Headteacher they should in the first instance contact the Chair of Governors.

Self Reporting

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty or perhaps a physical or mental health problem which they know will impede 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 members of staff concerned. Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most situations this cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

Further advice and support

It is recognised that whistleblowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from the Headteacher, HR department or your professional trade union.