



Woodlane High School

achieving success in a nurturing environment

Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy

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1. Introduction

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the workplace. However, individuals may not always feel able to express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to colleagues or to the school, or because they fear harassment or victimisation.

The Governing Body is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty, integrity and accountability. In line with this commitment, the school encourages staff to raise any serious concerns about suspected wrongdoing or malpractice at the earliest possible stage.

This policy aims to create an open and supportive culture where concerns can be raised without fear of reprisal. It provides a framework for reporting concerns in confidence and ensures they will be investigated appropriately.

This policy complies with the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which protects workers who make disclosures in the public interest.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals working at or with the school, including:

- Employees
- Governors
- Volunteers
- Agency staff
- Contractors
- Trainees and work experience students

It is intended to cover concerns that fall outside other school procedures, such as personal grievances.

Concerns about personal employment matters should normally be raised through the school's grievance procedure.

3. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing, malpractice, or risks within the organisation.

A whistleblowing disclosure may relate to concerns that:

- A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed, or is likely to be committed.
- There has been a failure to comply with a legal obligation.
- A miscarriage of justice has occurred or may occur.
- The health or safety of any individual is being endangered.
- Damage to the environment has occurred or may occur.
- Public funds are being misused.
- Fraud, bribery or corruption is taking place.
- Safeguarding concerns, including abuse of children or vulnerable individuals.
- Any deliberate attempt to conceal information relating to the above.

A disclosure will normally be protected if it is made in the public interest and the individual has a reasonable belief that the information is substantially true.

4. Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- Encourage individuals to raise concerns about suspected wrongdoing.
- Provide clear procedures for reporting concerns.
- Ensure concerns are investigated appropriately.
- Protect individuals from victimisation or harassment when raising concerns in good faith.
- Promote a culture of openness, transparency and accountability.

5. Safeguards

Protection from Victimisation

The Governing Body will not tolerate harassment, victimisation, or detrimental treatment of anyone who raises a concern in good faith.

Any employee who believes they have been subjected to such treatment should report this immediately. Such behaviour may be treated as a disciplinary offence.

Protection under the Law

Individuals who make disclosures in accordance with this policy may be protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

6. Confidentiality

The school will treat all disclosures in confidence and will make every effort to protect the identity of individuals who raise concerns.

However, there may be circumstances where it becomes necessary to reveal the identity of the individual, for example if the matter leads to disciplinary or legal proceedings. In such cases, the school will discuss this with the individual beforehand wherever possible.

7. Anonymous Allegations

Concerns may be raised anonymously; however, individuals are encouraged to provide their name where possible.

Anonymous allegations can be more difficult to investigate. They will be considered at the discretion of the school, taking into account:

- The seriousness of the issues raised.
- The credibility of the concern.
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation.

8. Untrue Allegations

If an individual raises a concern in good faith but the concern is not confirmed by investigation, no action will be taken against them.

However, if an allegation is made maliciously, knowingly false, or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken.

9. How to Raise a Concern

Concerns should normally be raised in the first instance with:

- A Senior Leader, or
- The Headteacher

If the concern relates to the Headteacher, the matter should be raised with the Chair of Governors.

If the concern relates to the Chair of Governors, it should be raised with the Governing Body or the relevant external authority.

Concerns may be raised:

- Verbally
- In writing
- By email

When raising a concern, it is helpful to provide:

- The background and history of the issue.
- Relevant dates and details.
- The reasons why the situation causes concern.

Individuals are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but should have a reasonable belief that the information is accurate.

Individuals may be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague at any meeting relating to their concern.

10. How the School Will Respond

The school will take all concerns seriously and will investigate them appropriately.

Within 10 working days, the person receiving the concern will normally:

- Acknowledge receipt of the concern.
- Indicate how the matter will be handled.
- Provide an estimated timescale for further action.

Investigations may involve:

- Internal management investigation.
- Externally commissioned investigation.
- Referral to the governing body.
- Disciplinary procedures.
- Referral to external authorities where appropriate.

Where appropriate, concerns may also be referred to safeguarding authorities or the police.

Subject to legal and confidentiality constraints, the individual raising the concern will be informed of the outcome of any investigation.

11. Support for Individuals Raising Concerns

The school recognises that raising concerns can be difficult.

Where appropriate, the school will take steps to minimise any difficulties experienced by the individual raising the concern. Advice and support may be available through:

- Trade unions
- Professional associations
- Independent whistleblowing advice organisations such as Protect.

12. Escalating Concerns

This policy is intended to provide a safe mechanism for raising concerns internally.

However, if an individual feels that their concern has not been properly addressed, they may raise the matter externally with an appropriate body, such as:

- A relevant professional or regulatory body
- The local authority
- The police
- An independent whistleblowing advice organisation such as Protect.

Individuals should take care not to disclose confidential information unnecessarily.