

WOODLANDS INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Approved by:	Mr Tim Culpin (CoG)	Date: 06/09/2023
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WOODLANDS INFANT & NURSERY SCHOOL

Whistleblowing Policy

Purpose

Woodlands Infant and Nursery School is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with this commitment, the school encourages employees with serious concerns about the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns. This also applies to concerns about the activities of staff, Governors and external organisations in their dealings with the school.

This policy:

- provides the basis on which employees can raise any such concerns they may have, and receive feedback on action taken;
- allows employees to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the School's response; and
- gives protection from reprisals or victimisation for 'whistleblowing' in good faith.

The Policy

There are existing procedures in place to enable employees to raise grievances about their own employment. This policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of individual grievances. The concern may be about something that:

- is unlawful;
- is malpractice i.e. inappropriate use of delegated budgets, tampering with tender documents to advantage a particular party, manipulation of accounting records and finances, decision making for personal gain, inappropriate use of school assets, deceit, abuse of position;
- is against the school's policies;
- amounts to improper conduct;
- seems likely to harm somebody or the environment; or
- represents a cover-up of these sorts of issues.

This policy applies to all employees.

Safeguards

Harassment or victimisation

The Governing Body recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisals from those responsible for the malpractice. The school will not tolerate harassment or victimisation. Disciplinary action will be taken against any member of staff who tries to stop another employee from raising a concern or who is responsible for any act of recrimination or victimisation against an employee who raises a concern in good faith

Confidentiality

The School will protect the identity of employees who raise concerns and do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated, however, that the investigation may reveal the source of the information, and statements made by the employees who raised the issue may be required as part of the evidence. The School encourages employees to put their name to allegations made. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the school. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken account of will include:

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

If an allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. However, if employees make allegations that are malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action against them is likely.

How to raise a concern

The earlier employees express their concern, the easier it is to take action.

As a first step an employee should normally raise concerns with their Headteacher, a member of the Senior Leadership Team or Chair of Governors. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice. Employee's who feel that they cannot approach management in the school should approach either:

- Vice Chair of Governors
- Staff Governor
- Or the Local Authority if the employee is seeking anonymity from the school and the governing body

Concerns are better raised in writing. This should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why the employee is concerned about the situation.

An employee who does not feel able to put their concerns in writing can telephone or meet the appropriate officer. (The Local Authority will normally only follow up investigations where the informant put their allegation in writing providing a name and contact number. However anonymous allegations may be investigated at the discretion of the Local Authority).

Employees may invite a colleague, their trade union or professional association to raise the matter in conjunction with them.

How will the school respond?

The action taken by the School will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may for example:

- be investigated internally;
- be referred to the Police;

In order to protect individuals and the School, initial inquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

Within two weeks of a concern being received, the Chair of Governors or appropriate member of school staff will write to the employee who raised the issue:

- acknowledging that the concern has been raised;
- indicating how it proposes to deal with the matter;
- where possible, giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response and;
- telling the employee whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

The amount of contact between the investigators considering the issue and the employee who has raised the issue will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from the employee.

When any meeting is arranged with the employee, they will be given the right to be accompanied by a representative or fellow worker who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

If the SLT/Chair of Governors decides it is appropriate for an investigation to take place, then advice will be sought from the Local Authority. Where it is necessary to safeguard children or vulnerable adults the appropriate procedures will be followed. In addition, where it is established that the complaint involves bullying or unlawful discrimination it will be necessary to seek appropriate professional advice.

If an investigation is carried out, you will always be informed of the final outcome. It might not be possible to provide full details if the information contains personal details of a third party or is subject to legal or contractual constraints.

Taking the issue further:

This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue to raise relevant concerns within the School. It is hoped that employees will be satisfied with the action taken as a result.

If an employee is not satisfied, and feel it is right to take the matter outside the School, the following are possible contact points, some or all of which may be appropriate:

- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations;
- where the complaint is about financial management or propriety then the employee can contact Lincolnshire Internal Audit and Risk manager who has been designated to deal with such complaints. (see Scheme for Financing Schools)
- other members of the Local Authority who will follow NS investigation protocol
- the Police;
- the charity Public Concern At Work (telephone 020 7404 6609).

If an employee does take the matter outside of the School, they must make sure that they do not disclose otherwise confidential information.

Management of the policy

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. They will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcomes which will be minuted.

This Policy will be used in conjunction with the guidance provided by the Lincolnshire County Council. Appendix A

Contact Details

Headteacher	Joanne Bingwa 01522 683557
Staff Governor	Carrie Page 01522 683557
School Administrator/Burser	Maxine Clark Maxine.clark@woodlands.lincs.sch.uk

For contact details of the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors please ask Maxine Clark.

Appendix A

A2.4 Whistleblowing

The Public Information Disclosure Act (1998) applies to the public, private and voluntary sectors. It aims to improve accountability and good governance in all organisations by assuring workers concerned about malpractice that it is safe to raise their concerns.

To this end Lincolnshire County Council has produced a 'whistleblowing' policy document that is intended to encourage and enable anyone who works for or on behalf of the Council to raise serious concerns within the Council rather than overlooking a problem and to make it clear that reporting will happen without fear of reprisal.

Examples of issues which might be raised, would include,

- a) conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
- b) disclosures related to miscarriage of justice
- c) health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- d) damage to the environment
- e) the unauthorised use of public funds
- f) possible fraud or corruption

- g) sexual or physical abuse of clients
- h) unethical conduct

Or it may be something that,

- a) makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards
- b) is against the official policies
- c) is unlawful
- d) amounts to improper conduct.

This Policy provides for the following stakeholders to raise concerns arising from reasonable suspicion of malpractice within or relating to the Council, Employees, school governors, members, partners and those contractors working for the Council on Council premises, e.g. agency staff, builders, and drivers. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the Council in their own premises, for example care homes. It has been discussed with the relevant trade unions and has their support.