



#### **Introduction**

#### **What is Whistleblowing?**

Someone blows the whistle when they tell someone in authority about a dangerous or illegal activity that they are aware of through their work. This can include health and safety risks, environmental issues, fraud, poor standards of care and other problems.

#### **Why is Whistleblowing important?**

The school is committed to high quality services and being open, fair and honest.

Staff have a duty to prevent dangerous or illegal actions at work. All staff, including those who work for a contractor or agency, have an important part to play. Often it is only through whistleblowing that information comes to light.

#### **Why does the school need a Whistleblowing procedure?**

This procedure:

- Supports the Public Interest Disclosure Act.
- Gives you a way of raising concerns in a structured and supportive environment within the school.
- Means that you can feel confident to bring up genuinely held concerns without fear of recrimination.
- Shows the school's commitment to investigating and taking firm management action where wrongdoing may be proven.
- Encourages and enables you to raise concerns within the school rather than overlooking problems or "blowing the whistle" outside the school.

#### **Who can use the School's whistleblowing procedure?**

- All staff, whether full time or part time, permanent or temporary;
- Governors.

#### **When should I raise a concern?**

If you find out about activities that harm students of the school, colleagues working for the school or the school itself. These may include:

- Illegal activities
- Miscarriages of justice
- Risks to health and safety
- Damage to the environment
- Misuse of public funds
- Fraud and corruption
- Abuse of students
- Other wrongdoing (including attempts to cover up wrongdoing)



For example, you could raise a serious concern about service provision, the actions of managers or the actions of others acting on behalf of the school, which:

- Fall below the school's standards of practice
- Are against the school's policies
- Amount to improper conduct

#### **How does this procedure fit with the school's other procedures?**

This procedure does not replace the school's Complaints Procedure.

The Whistleblowing Procedure is about concerns regarding the public interest. If you are concerned about an issue relating to your personal position at work, you should use the Grievance Procedure approved by the Governing Body.

#### **Role of Trade Unions**

The Whistleblowing Procedure has been developed in consultation with Staff Side Representatives and Teachers' Professional Associations and has their full support. Your trade union will advise you on raising concerns and/or support you in doing so, as appropriate.

#### **The process**

##### **Who do I tell?**

You should approach the Head Teacher; but if you feel unable to do so or you are concerned about something serious, you can approach the Chair of Governors or the Director of the Education Commission for the Archdiocese of Southwark. You can raise a concern by talking to someone or writing to them.

##### **Is there any support available for me?**

You can get the support of a colleague, who may accompany you when raising a concern. Remember that by speaking up, it is not up to you to prove your concerns. However, you should be prepared to give the background and the reasons why you feel particularly troubled.

##### **What happens next?**

We will look into your concern to see what should happen. This may involve:

- An internal investigation
- An external auditor
- An independent inquiry
- The police

We will normally write to you within 10 working days of receiving your concerns. We will list them, tell you who is handling the matter, how you can contact them and whether we need your further help. We will also tell you where to get support if you need it.



#### **What happens in an internal investigation?**

If there is an internal investigation, a special investigations team will be set up. This team is responsible for gathering all relevant information and meeting with all relevant staff. The team may interview a number of staff.

When they have finished their investigation, they must produce a report on their findings. The report is then considered by the Governing Body. Based on the findings, the Governors will then decide what further action to take. This may include disciplinary action for anyone involved in any wrongdoing.

On the other hand, if the investigation finds that the concerns raised or allegations made by the person who has 'blown the whistle' are malicious, frivolous, or for personal gain, disciplinary action will be taken against them.

Depending on any legal restrictions on giving you information, we will let you know the outcome of any investigation.

#### **Will I be involved in an investigation?**

You may not want us to let people know that you have raised a concern. If we can investigate and resolve your concern without involving you, the school will not involve you further. If we are not able to resolve the problem without telling someone else who you are, we will always talk to you first.

The school encourages you to tell us who you are whenever possible, as anonymous concerns are more difficult to investigate and the school cannot protect your position or give you any feedback if we do not know who you are.

#### **Will I get into trouble and will anyone find out that I have 'blown the whistle'?**

The school does not allow the harassment or victimisation of anyone who raises a genuine concern. Harassment may result in disciplinary action.

There may be a situation where you want to tell us of your concern and not let anyone else know that you have. If we are not able to resolve the problem without telling someone else who you are, we will always talk to you first.

#### **Where can I get independent advice about raising a concern?**

You can talk to:

- Your union
- An independent legal advisor
- The Independent Charity, Public Concern at Work, telephone number: 020 7404 6609 or via their website <http://www.pcaw.org.uk> Their lawyers can give you free confidential advice on how to raise a concern about serious wrongdoing at work.



#### **Can I take the matter further?**

We encourage all staff to use the procedure. But if you are not satisfied with any action and you feel it is right to take the matter outside the school, you can contact the following organisations:

- The Education Commission – Tel No. 01689 829255
- Landau Baker (external Auditors) – Tel No. 020 8359 9988
- The Health and Safety Executive - Tel No. 020 7556 2201 (Southwark Office)
- The Information Commissioner - Tel No. 0303 123 1113

#### **What is the Public Interest Disclosure Act?**

The Public Interest Disclosure Act provides workers with protection from dismissal or other damage as a result of making a disclosure of information in the public interest about wrongdoing at work. Such disclosures are protected if they are done according to the Act's provisions. Disclosures may be made to the employer, prescribed regulatory bodies or on a wider basis to the Police. The Act's protection is strongest where workers raise matters with their employers.

#### **Telling other people confidential information**

Giving out information about third parties to whom the school owes a duty of confidence may not be protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act. This may lead to disciplinary action. If you are in any doubt you should seek advice from your line manager, union, lawyer or Public Concern at Work (020 7404 6609 <http://www.pcaaw.org.uk/> ).

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