

Woodfall Primary & Nursery School

Whistle Blowing Policy

March 2024



In Consultation with		
Date Agreed	Name	Position
	Helen Hough	Headteacher
	Duncan Haworth	Chair of Governors
Date for Review:		

WOODFALL PRIMARY and NURSERY SCHOOL

Whistle Blowing Policy

Confidential Reporting Procedure for School Staff (“Whistle Blowing”)

1. Introduction

This procedure applies to all school staff, including Headteachers, but not to employees of Catering Services, who are subject to the Local Authority’s (LA) Whistle Blowing Protocol.

As a public service organisation, the LA will use public funds prudently and apply the highest standards of conduct throughout the organisation. This procedure encourages you to help maintain these standards, by enabling you to draw attention, within the school or LA to any concerns which you may have.

Public disclosure may well be justified at some point but this should not happen before the School / LA has had the opportunity to investigate the concern. Premature or unnecessary publicity may impede proper investigations or hurt individuals.

Examples of concerns that may be raised under the procedure are:

- Law breaking.
- Miscarriages of justice.
- Health and safety risks (to anyone).
- Damage to the environment.
- Unauthorised use of money.
- Dishonesty, fraud and corruption.
- Sexual, physical or financial abuse of clients.
- Other unethical conduct.

The School / LA wants normal operational or managerial channels to be sufficiently open and effective for most concerns to be raised that way. But this will not always be appropriate or possible and that is why we have a Confidential Reporting Procedure. It offers the means to raise concerns you may have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of staff, governors/elected members or other people acting on behalf of the School / LA. A concern may arise, for example, from worries about failure to observe standards or policies being circumvented or improper conduct.

The procedure does not cover concerns that are covered by other procedures. For example, an employment problem may well be covered by the School’s Grievance Procedure or Personal Harassment & Bullying Procedure.

2. Harassment or Victimisation

You may be put off raising a concern because you are worried about reprisals. If you raise a concern in good faith and genuinely believed it to be well founded, you should have nothing to fear. You will be doing your duty to the School / LA and the public. The School / LA will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including covert pressure) and will do all it can to protect you. If you are involved in other procedures, such as disciplinary or redundancy, these be kept quite separate from the investigation of your complaint.

You will not be penalised in any way, where you make an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed after it has been investigated. A concern that is raised frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain may result in disciplinary action.

3. Confidentiality

Your concern will be treated in strict confidence, within this Procedure, and everything done to keep your identity secret (if this is what you want). But note that you may have to be a witness at some point. It might then not be possible to keep your identity fully secret.

4. Anonymous Allegations

An anonymous concern is likely to carry much less weight than one which is signed; the investigating manager would have to decide whether or not to accept it. This decision would depend on the seriousness of the issue, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of being able to confirm the allegation in other ways. Signed concerns are always better.

5. Raising A Concern

Who to approach

Where your concern relates to the school, if possible, you should approach someone within the school (a Headteacher with a concern should approach their Chair of Governors with a copy of this Procedure). If the nature/sensitivity of your concern makes this difficult, however, there is a list of the managers within the LA with whom you are free to raise a concern (see the last page for contact addresses and phone numbers). When deciding who it would be best to approach, take into account the type of matter, its seriousness and its sensitivity – and who may be involved. Some examples are given:

- The manager for your Department/team, their manager, the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors. (*Example - for a concern within the school.*)
- The LA Schools Manager or another LA Manager in Education (or the LA Manager for the service involved in the concern). (*Example - for a concern within the wider Education Department.*)
- The Head of Audit. (*Example - for a concern about financial probity.*)
- The Deputy LA Clerk and LA Solicitor (who is also the LA Monitoring Officer). (*Example - for a concern which has LA wide implications or should be raised with someone independent of the Education Department.*)
- Your professional association/trade union (if you have one – see below). (*Example – you are reluctant to take the matter direct to management and would prefer to be independently advised/assisted*)

How to raise your concern

You can raise your concern orally (ie, face to face or over the phone) or in writing. If you write, mark the envelope 'personal and confidential'. Whichever way you choose, please give as much information as you can. Remember also to give your name, and for employees your job, where you work and say if you do not want to be contacted at work (if so, give your home address and phone number).

The following headings should help you organise your thoughts but you do not have to follow them exactly:

- Why you are concerned and the background information.
- Any other procedures which you have already used - and what happened.
- The people who are involved and where they work.
- Dates or periods of time.
- The names and jobs of any other people who will (or may) support your concern.

The earlier a concern is raised the better. Whilst you will not be expected to prove that allegations are true, you will need to show that you have a reasonable basis for your concern.

You may want to discuss the matter with one or two colleagues first. Their support could be helpful. There is nothing to stop two or more of you putting your names to a concern.

Involvement of your trade union or professional association

You may ask your trade union or professional association to raise a matter on your behalf or advise you on how to articulate the case yourself. In this case - if you wish - you can remain anonymous when the concern is first raised. But you may have to be involved personally if the matter goes further.

You may also have your trade union, professional association or a friend at any meeting or interview.

Help with the procedure

Any of the following will help you to understand *the procedure*:

- Your Headteacher/line manager for your Department/team.
- The HR Manager for Education.
- Head of Audit.
- Deputy LA Clerk and LA Solicitor (who is also the LA Monitoring Officer).

HOW YOUR CONCERN WILL BE DEALT WITH

As a start, discreet enquiries will be made by a senior manager of the school (or Governor, in the case of a Headteacher) or, if your concern does not relate to the school, a senior manager of the LA, to decide whether an investigation is needed and if so, how it should be carried out. This will help protect everyone concerned. The overriding principle will be the public interest.

If this first, testing, stage shows that the concern should be followed up, there will either be a special examination or another procedure will be used, if appropriate. Examples of special procedures are the School/LA's Disciplinary Procedure, the Personal Harassment and Bullying Procedure or child protection procedures. It may be necessary to involve other agencies, for example the police or the LA's external auditors. Any urgent action will be taken before the investigation starts. It may be possible of course, to sort out the concern without a detailed investigation.

WHAT YOU WILL BE TOLD

Within 10 working days of your concern being received, the manager who carries out the initial enquiries will write to you confirming:

- What initial enquiries have been made.
- How your concern has been or will be dealt with.
- How long any further action may take (as far as this can be known).
- What further work is planned and how you may be involved.

The amount of contact you have with the people considering the matter will depend on many things. These include the type of concern, the potential difficulties of investigating it and the availability of information. You may need to provide more help. Wherever possible, you will be told the final outcome of an investigation.

PERSONAL SUPPORT

The School/LA will do all it can to minimise any difficulties which you may have because you have mentioned your concern. As far as we can, you will be offered personal support and this will be arranged by your Headteacher or LA Personnel, as appropriate. For example, if you had to give evidence in disciplinary or criminal proceedings, full advice about the procedure would be given to you.

IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE SCHOOL'S/COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

This procedure is meant to give everyone an effective way to raise a concern *within* the School/LA (and if possible, to resolve it internally). You should not feel that you have to take an issue outside the School/LA to get satisfaction. But if you are still unhappy after using the procedure (and getting a final response), you are entitled to consider taking your concern elsewhere. If you do this, these are some contacts which are available:

- The LA's external auditors.
- Your trade union/professional association.
- A Citizens Advice Bureau.
- A relevant professional or regulatory body (e.g. the GTC).
- A relevant voluntary organisation.
- The police.

If you raise the matter outside the School/LA, you must take into account the rules about disclosing confidential information (see Section 12 of the Code of Conduct).

6. MONITORING THE PROCEDURE

The LA's Monitoring Officer, working with the LA Personnel Officer, will monitor how the procedure works. They will report at least annually to the LA's Performance and Standards Committee.

Main Contact Details

Headteacher	Mrs Helen Hough 0151 832 5020 head@woodfall.cheshire.sch.uk
Chair of Governors	Mr Duncan Haworth 0151 353 8448 07976 654192

CONTACT DETAILS OUTSIDE SCHOOL:

Whistleblowing Officer	Helen Peters (Internal Audit) 01244 977 375 helen.peters@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Directly to Officers (Monitoring, Finance)	01244 977 395
External Auditors	Grant Thornton 0151 224 7200
Whistleblowing Hotline (Internal)	01244 977 223 whistleblowing@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Fraud Hotline	0300 123 7030 fraud@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Council's Employee Assistance Programme	0800 116 4368 www.lifestyleaction.net
Public Concern at Work (Independent whistleblowing charity)	Helpline: (020) 7404 6609 E-mail: helpline@pcaw.co.uk Website: www.pcaw.co.uk

Note: If you write to us, please mark the envelope 'private and confidential'; in any event, your contact details and any other personal information about you or your family will be kept strictly confidential throughout the investigation.