



Whistle Blowing Policy

1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Encourage individuals affected to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and that their confidentiality will be respected
- Let all staff in the school know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the school
- Set clear procedures for how the school will respond to such concerns
- Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistle-blowing concern
- Assure staff that they will not be victimised for raising a legitimate concern through the steps set out in the policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken (though vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue)

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the school in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

2. Legislation

This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as [government guidance on whistle-blowing](#). We also take into account the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

3. Definition of whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is "in the public interest". Examples of whistle-blowing include (but are not limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Pupils' or staff health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures

- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest
- Damage to the environment

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the trust count as whistle-blowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistle-blowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

When staff have a concern, they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures.

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) has:

- [Further guidance](#) on the difference between a whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure
- A free and confidential [advice line](#)

4. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

a) Employees should, if possible, raise a concern in the first instance with their Headteacher or Chair of Governors if the concern is regarding the Headteacher.

b) Non-employees, e.g. agency workers, volunteers or parents of pupils, should raise a concern in the first instance with their Headteacher.

c) Governors should raise concerns with their Chair of Governors or Governor Services.

In the event of a concern being of an extreme and potentially serious nature, employees and others may raise it directly with the Chair of Governors or the MASA (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements).

For all concerns in respect of any suspected financial irregularity, you must notify the RBWM Head of Finance and Head of Audit and Investigation immediately.

In circumstances where an individual feels that it is necessary to raise a concern with an independent body rather than raise it internally, they may call any of the External Contacts as shown at the end of this Policy or seek advice from their union.

5. PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE

When a concern is received by the headteacher - referred to from here as the 'recipient' - they will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union or professional association representative
- Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting, and record the information. If it becomes apparent the concern is not of a whistle-blowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure
- Reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern. If the concern is found to be malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action may be taken.
- Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there is:
 - The recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the Headteacher, if appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. In other cases, they may need to report the matter to the police
 - The person who raised the concern should be informed of how the matter is being investigated and an estimated timeframe for when they will be informed of the next steps

6. HOW THE SCHOOL WILL RESPOND

Once a concern is raised, the School will respond with an investigation by management. Further courses of action will vary, depending on the issue.

The School will make initial enquiries. There will be consultation, with the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or LADO if appropriate to help decide if an investigation is required and if so, what form it should take.

As soon as possible and in any case within 10 working days of a concern being raised, the person handling the matter, e.g. the Headteacher, will write to the individual raising the concern acknowledging that it has been raised and indicating how, as far as possible, it will be dealt with. The individual will be kept informed of progress and will receive a full and final response, subject to any legal restraints.

Any decision to refer a matter to the Police will be taken by the Headteacher, in consultation with the LADO. The school will normally wish the Police to be made aware of, and investigate independently, those offenders where financial impropriety is discovered.

Depending on the nature of the allegation, the Investigating Officer will normally work closely with the school and LADO to ensure that all allegations are thoroughly investigated and reported upon.

The Investigating Officer will:

- deal promptly with the matter
- record all evidence received
- ensure that all evidence is sound and adequately supported
- ensure security of all evidence collected
- contact other agencies such as Police
- assist management to implement RBWM's disciplinary procedures, where appropriate.

The processes outlined above will also apply to Governors.

RBWM's disciplinary procedures will be used to facilitate a thorough investigation of any allegations of improper behaviour by employees.

7. SAFEGUARDS

Harassment or Victimisation

School recognises that it can be difficult to report a concern, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the potential malpractice. School will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of the person who has raised the issue and will take serious disciplinary action against individuals who perpetrate such harassment.

Confidentiality

Wherever practical and possible, school will protect the identity of those raising a concern if they do not wish their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated, however, that the process of investigation may reveal the source of information and a statement may also be required as part of the evidence. Advice and support will be provided where this is the case and disclosure of your identity will not be done without your consent unless legally required to do so.

Anyone may approach the Headteacher confidentially if they so wish and as long as their allegation appears to have been raised honestly and in good faith, their wish for confidentiality will be supported.

Anonymous Allegations

Individuals raising concerns are strongly encouraged to put their name to any allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, and will only be considered if the school advises that the allegation demonstrates sufficient cause to take the matter further.

Untrue Allegations

If someone makes an allegation in good faith and it is not confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken against the person who has made the report. If, however, an individual makes an allegation, which is subsequently shown to be malicious or vexatious, serious disciplinary action is likely to be taken against them.

8. HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

This Policy is intended to provide all School employees with an effective process for raising concerns within the school/RBWM. They hope that those using this process will be satisfied with the way their concerns are treated and any investigations that may be carried out. However, if they are not satisfied and feel they want to take the matter outside the school, then either the Head of Human Resources will provide advice as to other options.

9. RESPONSIBILITY OF SCHOOL AND GOVERNORS

The Headteacher and Governors have overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this Policy.

The Headteacher should be notified of all concerns raised through this Policy. All concerns raised and the outcomes (in a form which respects the individual's confidentiality) will be maintained by the school.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on: Staff grievance policy/Complaint's procedure/Child protection policy