

NORTHWOLD PRIMARY SCHOOL WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY

VISION:

At Northwold we are committed to working together to prepare our children for life as responsible, global citizens.

- with a strong Inclusive ethos
- values individuality and recognizes that each person has an important contribution to make to our society
- ensures equal access and opportunity for all
- actively seeks to remove the barriers to learning and supports interactive participation of all its children ensuring best outcomes for all.

WE WILL EMPOWER ALL CHILDREN:

- To be active and engaged learners who take responsibility for their learning, **behaviour** and success.
- To develop their confidence, honesty, self-awareness and resilience, as well as pride in their individual identities.
- To develop the skills to make positive decisions about their futures, their families, their communities and the world.
- To develop skills and knowledge, that can be applied in a variety of ways, so they can be independent when they are working and living in our changing world.

Introduction

The Northwold Primary School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, and accountability in all of its activities. It also expects a high standard of conduct and integrity from employees. Any employee who has a serious concern about any aspect of the school's work or the actions of any of its employees should voice their concerns through established internal channels, without fear of harassment or victimisation.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the Northwold Primary School policy and procedure for dealing with concerns raised by employees.

Aim

This policy aims to:

- provide avenues for employees to raise concerns internally as a matter of course, and receive feedback on any action taken;
- provide for matters to be dealt with quickly and appropriately; and ensure that concerns are taken seriously;
- encourage employees to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon their concerns
- provide avenues for employees to raise these concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- reassure employees that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith in accordance with the procedure

This policy applies to all employees including those working on a temporary or casual basis. There are existing procedures in place to allow staff to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment within the School's Discipline, Conduct and Grievance Procedures.

This Policy is intended to cover reasonably serious concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. That concern may be about any of the following:

- A Criminal conviction that has been, is being or is likely to be committed
- Fraud and Corruption

- Unauthorised use of public funds
- A failure to comply with a legal obligation
- A health and safety risk relating to any individual
- A miscarriage of justice
- A damage to the environment
- Actions that are contrary to any of the Academy's policies
- Actions or behaviour that falls below established standards of practice
- Abuse and welfare of students or staff
- Harassment or victimisation of students or staff
- Any actions or concerns regarding practice that could result in a financial loss to the Academy
- The deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above matters
- Other unethical conduct

This list is not exhaustive.

Safeguards

Harassment or Victimisation

It is recognised that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice. Harassment or victimisation will not be acceptable and necessary actions will be taken to protect employees when they raise a concern in good faith.

This does not mean that if an employee is already the subject of internal procedures such as disciplinary or redundancy, that those procedures will be halted as a result of that employee raising a concern under the whistleblowing policy.

Confidentiality

An employee's identity will be protected if confidentiality is requested. However, it must be understood that should the concern raised need to be addressed through another procedure, e.g. disciplinary procedures, the employee may be asked to provide a signed statement as part of the evidence, thus revealing identity. Failure to provide such a statement may mean that further action cannot be taken to address the concern and in some circumstances, the identity of the employee may be disclosed without their consent, although this will be discussed with the employee first.

Anonymous Allegations

Employees are encouraged to put their name to an allegation. Allegations expressed anonymously are much less powerful and more difficult to address, but they will be considered at the discretion of the Governing Body. In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

Untrue Allegations

If an employee makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against that employee. If, however, there is clear evidence that an employee has made malicious or vexatious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against that employee.

Unfounded Allegations

Following investigation, allegations may be confirmed as unfounded. This outcome will be notified to the employee who raised the concern, who will be informed that the matter will be concluded and that it should not be raised again unless new evidence becomes available.

Support available to Employees

It is recognised that raising concerns can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support will be made available, as appropriate, to both the employee(s) raising the concerns and the employee(s) subject to investigation

Procedure

If wrong-doing in the workplace is suspected;

- Do not approach or accuse the individuals directly;
- Do not try to investigate the matter;
- Do not convey such suspicions to anyone other than those with the proper authority but do something!

Making a disclosure – initial action:

As soon as an employee becomes reasonably concerned about a matter, they should first raise the issue with their line manager [the “receiving manager”], unless the disclosure concerns them, in which case the employee should write to the Headteacher or the HR Manager.

Disclosures involving the Headteacher should be raised with the Chair of Governors. In this case, the Chair of Governors may appoint an independent investigator to consider the case and if there are grounds for proceeding. Disclosures concerning a member of the Senior Leadership Team [SLT] should be raised with the Headteacher. This can be done via the employee’s line manager.

All managers have a responsibility to act on the concerns raised, in accordance with this procedure. Failure to do so in accordance with the policy and procedure may lead to disciplinary action.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing and should give the background, the nature of the malpractice that is alleged; relevant dates where possible; the reasons for the concern and the names of individuals against whom the allegations are made.

If the concern is raised verbally, then the person receiving the information should put in writing, an outline of the matters raised and this should be confirmed in writing to the employee. This should be done within ten working days.

Once a concern is raised the receiving manager, should report the matter to the Headteacher who will appoint an appropriate manager to investigate [the “investigating manager”]. This could be the receiving manager. The Head teacher will determine whether the matter constitutes a disclosure or whether it should be dealt with under another procedure [the employee will be informed of this]. If the matter is dealt with under the Whistleblowing policy then the employee will then be informed of the name of the investigating manager. If the matter relates to the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will appoint the investigating manager. Due to the nature of the disclosure the Head teacher may appoint an independent external investigator to look into the matter. If the matter

relates to the Headteacher then decisions for proceeding will be made by the Chair of Governors.

The receiving manager will then inform the employee in writing of the process to be followed.

The receiving manager will also inform any employee against whom allegations are made of the allegations. This will normally be done in writing within ten working days.

However this may be delayed if it is likely to jeopardise the investigation.

Handling a disclosure

The investigating manager will be responsible for deciding whether there are grounds for proceeding further with the case. Potential action that the investigating manager could take includes a clarification of the facts, a more formal investigation or the employee may be advised that the matter is better dealt with under another policy.

Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated by the investigating manager or internal auditors
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the external auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry by an outside body

This will be determined by the investigating manager in conjunction with the Headteacher and the HR Manager.

Within four weeks of a concern being raised, the investigating manager will write to both parties:

- indicating how the Academy proposes to deal with the matter, and where an internal investigation is to take place giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a full response
- indicating whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

Appendix 1 provides details of the role of the investigating manager.

Any internal investigation should take no longer than three months to complete from the date of receipt of original disclosure. As part of the investigation, the investigation manager will decide:

- whether disciplinary action be taken against any employee
- whether changes should be recommended to any of the school's procedures
- whether any other action should be recommended.

These will be detailed in a final report.

The investigating manager will send a copy of the final report, including recommendations, to the Headteacher who will consider the recommendations and determine what action, if any, to take. The investigating manager will also give a response in writing to the employee who made the disclosure as soon as possible after the completion of the investigation. This response will include the outcome of the investigation and what action, if any, is to be taken, although precise details may not be given where there are legal constraints, or it would infringe a duty of confidence owed by us to someone else or where there are business reasons for not doing so.

The individual who is subject to the disclosure will also be informed of the outcome in writing and what action, if any, is to be taken as soon as possible after the completion of the investigation.

Appeal

An employee who raises a concern and is not satisfied with the outcome or action proposed may appeal against the decision to a more senior manager within the school. An appeal should be made to the HR Manager within five days' of receipt of the outcome letter.

The Headteacher will determine who should hear the appeal. The appeal should be completed within one month.

After the appeal process is exhausted, there is no further right of internal appeal. However, if the employee remains dissatisfied they may raise the matter further by contacting an outside agency.

An employee who is subject to action arising from a whistleblowing disclosure will be able to make representations, within five working days, to the Headteacher about the outcome of the report. The Headteacher will consider these representations and may direct further investigation or review as appropriate.

Timescales

Action	Timescale	By Who
Written acknowledgement of disclosure made in writing or if received verbally, including an outline of process to be	Within 10 working days	Person who receives the disclosure – the receiving manager
Confirm in writing to the person complained of that a disclosure has been received and that it is being considered.	Within 10 working days	Person who receives the disclosure – the receiving manager
Confirmation of whether the matter is to be investigated, and if so, how it will be investigated Letters sent to employee and person	Within four weeks of receipt of disclosure	Person appointed to investigate – the investigating manager
Written confirmation of outcome of investigation and action to be taken. Report sent to Headteacher recommendations and determines what action to take. Letters sent to employee	Within three months of receipt of disclosure	Person appointed to investigate – the investigating manager
Appeal against outcome of investigation	Within five working days from receipt of outcome	Employee who makes the disclosure
Appeal carried out	Within one month of appeal	Manager appointed to hear the appeal
Appeal to Headteacher	Within five working days from receipt of outcome	Employee subject to the disclosure

While the investigating officer will need to adhere to the timescales indicated, the nature

of some serious concerns may require the investigation to take longer than three months. In these circumstances all parties will be kept informed as to progress.

Recording and monitoring

The HR Officer will maintain a register containing all concerns that are brought to the organisation's attention. These will be reported on a quarterly basis to the Chair of Governors.

All records will be treated as confidential and kept no longer than necessary in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Individuals will have the right to request and have access to certain personal data. Employees will be given copies of meeting records, although some information may be withheld to protect a third party.

The role of the investigating Manager

The investigating manager will have the following responsibilities:

- Arrange individual interviews with relevant witnesses or individuals and inform them of their right to be accompanied at the meeting by their trade union representative or work colleague
- Establish the facts/obtain statements/collect documentary evidence
- Maintain detailed records of the investigation process
- Make any recommendations for action to be submitted to a more senior manager

The investigating manager will have the following responsibilities towards the employee who raised the disclosure:

- Hold a formal meeting with the employee making the complaint to discuss the matter
- Inform them of their right to be accompanied at any interview by their trade union representative or work colleague

- Keep the employee up to date with progress on the matter and agree timescales for action
- Notify the employee making the disclosure about the outcome of the investigation, including how the matter will be dealt with and whether they will be required to attend an investigatory interview
- Give details of employee support mechanisms available.

The investigating manager will have the following responsibilities towards the employee against whom the disclosure is raised.

- Inform the individual/individuals about whom the disclosure is made in writing of the disclosure, the seriousness of the allegations and provide any supporting evidence
- Advise in writing of the procedure to be followed
- Give the person the opportunity to respond in person and in writing to the claims made, and receive and consider any relevant evidence
- Inform them of their right to be accompanied at any interview by a trade union representative or work colleague
- Give details of employee support mechanisms available
- The investigating manager may also be required to act as a witness at any subsequent disciplinary hearing if required

Where necessary the school will provide support, counselling or mediation to any team subject to investigation in order to ensure normal working relationships are resumed as effectively as possible.

The manager appointed to hear an appeal will have the following responsibilities:

- Hold appeal meeting with employee who made the disclosure
- Ensure all parties are informed of their right to be accompanied at any meetings by a trade union representative/work colleague
- Review the investigation report/procedure followed and findings
- Decide whether to uphold appeal or not
- Initiate a new investigation if necessary
- Report the appeal findings in writing to the Headteacher, if applicable
- Communicate outcome in writing to the employee making the disclosure and the employee against whom the disclosure is made

Appendix

Appendix 1

- WHISTLEBLOWER REPORT FORM



Appendix 1

WHISTLEBLOWER REPORT FORM

- Please provide the following details for any suspected serious misconduct or any breach or suspected breach of law or regulation that may adversely impact the Company. Please note that you may be called upon to assist in the investigation, if required.

REPORTER'S CONTACT INFORMATION	
(This section may be left blank if the reporter wish to remain anonymous)	
NAME *	
DESIGNATION	
DEPARTMENT/AGENCY	
CONTACT NUMBER	
E-MAIL ADDRESS *	
SUSPECT'S INFORMATION	
NAME *	
DESIGNATION	
DEPARTMENT/AGENCY *	
CONTACT NUMBER	
E-MAIL ADDRESS	
WITNESSES'S INFORMATION (if any)	
NAME	
DESIGNATION	
DEPARTMENT/AGENCY *	
CONTACT NUMBER	
E-MAIL ADDRESS	
COMPLAINT: Briefly describe the misconduct / improper activity and how you know about it. Specify what, who, when, where and how. If there is more than one allegation, number each allegation and use as many pages as necessary.	
1. What misconduct / improper activity occurred?*	

2. Who committed the misconduct / improper activity?*	
3. When did it happen and when did you notice it?*	
4. Where did it happen?*	
5. Is there any evidence that you could provide us?	
6. Are there any other parties involved other than the suspect stated above?	
7. Do you have any other details or information which would assist us in the investigation?	
8. Any other comments?	
Date:	Signature:

This policy was presented to governors on _____

Review Date: _____

Sign: _____

