



Havannah Primary School

Whistle Blowing Policy

Summer Term 2023

Whistleblowing Policy

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This whistleblowing policy enables concerns of malpractice to be raised confidentially inside and, if necessary, outside Havannah Primary School. Whistleblowing is a procedure whereby employees disclose any wrong doings such as fraud, malpractice, breach of any health and safety law, or any other illegal act, either on the part of management or by fellow employees.

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, a worker has the right not to suffer detriment or be unfairly dismissed as a result of speaking out about crime, fraud, miscarriages of justice or other malpractices.

Who is this policy for?

Staff working within the school have an important role in helping the organisation to promote good practice, while providing a service to the community and protecting its potentially vulnerable pupils.

Employees are often the first to know when something is going seriously wrong - be it a serious danger to the public, pupils or major fraud. All too often the alarm is not sounded and the result is that the people in charge do not get the chance to take action before real damage is done.

Whistleblowing policies aim to ensure that serious concerns are properly raised and addressed in the work place and are increasingly recognised as a key tool to deliver good practice. It is essential that a whistleblowing policy is in place so all staff are aware of what is required of them.

Havannah School's policy on whistleblowing applies to all employees and each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour.

Qualifying disclosure

In order for a matter raised to receive consideration staff must:

- make the disclosure in good faith;
- reasonably believe that the information disclosed, and any allegation contained within it, are substantially true;
- not make the disclosure for reasons of personal gain;
- believe the relevant concern is of an exceptionally serious nature.

How you identify relevant matters of concern

A relevant concern may be something that staff consider:

- is unlawful;
- is against the school's standing orders or policies;
- falls below established standards or practice;
- amounts to improper conduct;
- is a health and safety risk, including risks to the public as well as other employees;
- carries potential damage to the environment;
- involves children or employees being put in danger. This includes sexual or physical abuse of children. Initially the procedure in the Child Protection Policy should be followed where there are concerns regarding children's welfare. However, if staff are not satisfied that the school has acted properly, the guidance in this policy may be used.
- involves funds being embezzled or fraud;
- is other unethical conduct.

This is not an exhaustive list. This whistleblowing policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. There are existing procedures in place to enable individuals to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment.

How to raise concerns

Where employees have concerns about malpractice and it is not appropriate to raise them through other procedures, such as grievance procedures, they should raise them with either:

Headteacher initially or Chair of Governors if the concern is about the Headteacher.

Who staff raise concerns with will depend on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice. If, for example, staff believe that senior management is involved, they can approach any of the following: The Chair of Governors, Internal Audit, the local authority Head of Human Resources. Ideally, they should put their concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates and places where possible.

How the School will respond

Where appropriate, the matters raised may be investigated by management, Chief Executive, Internal Audit Investigations Unit or Human Resources.

Within ten days of a concern being raised the responsible person will write to the employee to acknowledge their complaint and indicate how they propose to deal with the matter raised. The responsible person should give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response and provide individuals with information on staff support mechanisms.

The initial investigation should last five working days and will establish whether or not a concern is justified. Further investigations must be completed within six weeks, but extensions will be granted when necessary. The aim of these

timescales is to ensure that all cases of whistleblowing are dealt with as soon as possible.

Investigating the case

Following an allegation, where appropriate an independent and impartial manager will be involved in the investigation. Managers will make sure that the investigation is carried out as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. Once an investigation begins, every effort will be made to bring it to an early conclusion.

The amount of contact between the officers considering the allegation and the whistleblower will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided.

The school will take steps to minimise any difficulties which staff may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if staff are required to give evidence in criminal or

disciplinary proceedings, the school will arrange for them to receive advice about the procedure.

The school accepts that staff need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, we will inform them of the progress and outcomes of any investigation.

How the matter can be taken further

This policy is intended to provide staff with an avenue within the school to raise concerns. The School hopes that staff members will be satisfied with any action taken. If they are not, and if they feel it is right to take the matter outside the School, the following are possible contact points:

- the external organisation, Public Concern at Work
- your Trade Union
- your local Citizens Advice Bureau
- the District Auditor
- the Police.

If employees do take the matter outside the School, they should ensure that they do not disclose confidential information. Check with the Local Authority Chief Executive, as overall Monitoring Officer, if you have concerns about confidentiality.

Protecting whistleblowers' confidentiality

The School will seek to protect whistleblower's identity when they raise a concern and do not want their name to be disclosed. However, during the investigation, the source of the information may be revealed and they may be required to provide a statement.

Allegations

If staff make an allegation, which they think genuine, but is not proven, no action will be taken against them. If, however, staff maliciously raise an unfounded concern, then disciplinary action may be taken against them.

The policy encourages individuals to put their name to allegations they make. However, it is understood that some people may wish to remain anonymous. Concerns expressed in this way are much less powerful, but will be considered, at the discretion of the appointed investigating officer. In exercising this discretion, the seriousness of the issues raised and the credibility of the concern will be taken into account.

Victimisation

The employer will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect employees when they raise a concern in good faith. If staff do receive reprisals from those responsible for the malpractice or any other member of staff, the school and Local Authority will take the matter very seriously and where appropriate take disciplinary action.

Self Reporting

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their line manager so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned. Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most instances, this cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

Further advice and support

It is recognised that whistleblowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from line managers, the HR department and/or professional or trade unions.