



Whistleblowing Policy

Raising Concerns in the Public Interest

Ratified by the Governing Body: September 2017

Review Date: September 2020

A Confidential Reporting Policy for All Members of Staff and the General Public

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The School is committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty, integrity and accountability for the services it provides. However, the School recognises that there is always the risk that things can go wrong. Therefore, the School is keen to encourage those working for the School and members of the community to express their concerns when they think that there may be something seriously wrong regarding the activities of the School. This gives the School the opportunity to stop any unethical or unprofessional practices or wrongdoing within the organisation.
- 1.2 The School recognises that for individuals to come forward, they must have confidence that their concerns will be listened to and that the School will take prompt action to investigate and deal with concerns appropriately.
- 1.3 This Policy sets out how concerns about serious wrongdoing by the School can be raised and how the School will respond to these.
- 1.4 This Policy incorporates the provisions that are required from the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (as amended by the Enterprise & Regulatory Reform Act 2013), which protects members of staff against detrimental treatment or dismissal for disclosing normally confidential information because they reasonably believe it is in the public interest to do so. This is known as a “qualifying disclosure”.

2 Benefits of this policy

- 2.1 This Policy aims to:
 - Encourage and enable you to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon any concerns;
 - Provide avenues for you to raise concerns;
 - Ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied with the action taken;
 - Reassure members of staff that they will be protected from repercussions when raising genuine concerns;
 - Ensure that all those working for, or on behalf of, the School are aware that they must not treat individual(s) detrimentally because they have made a “qualifying disclosure” under the Act.

3 Scope

3.1 The types of concern covered by the Policy include:

- Conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
- Disclosures relating to miscarriages of justice
- Individual(s) covering up wrongdoing
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- Damage to the environment
- The unauthorised use of School funds
- Possible fraud, corruption or financial irregularity
- Practice which falls below established standards or practice
- Sexual or physical abuse
- Other unethical conduct

3.2 This Policy and its associated procedures is not intended to replace any existing School procedures that would be more appropriate for dealing with any concern raised under this Policy:

Members of staff

If your concern relates to how you have been personally treated at work as an employee under your contract of employment, you should raise it under the existing Grievance Procedure. If your concern relates to bullying or harassment, the School will respond to such concerns under the Disciplinary Procedure.

Members of the Public

If you have a concern or complaint about services provided to your family by the School, you should raise this using the Complaints Procedure.

4 Who can raise a concern under this Policy

4.1 This Policy applies to all:

- Employees
- Casual, agency workers and apprentices working for the School
- Contractors and employees of contractors working for the School
- Self-employed consultants working for the School
- Members of the public

5 Supporting you to raise a concern

5.1 **Confidentiality:**

We hope that you will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this Policy. However, if you want to raise your concerns confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If the situation arises where we are not able to resolve the concern without revealing your identity (for instance because your evidence is needed in court), we will discuss with you whether and how we can proceed.

5.2 Staff Raising Genuine Concerns:

The School aims to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this Policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Staff who raise genuine concerns under this Policy with a reasonable belief that it is true must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising the concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern.

Staff and those working for the School must not threaten or retaliate against a person who raises a concern under this policy. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Head Teacher immediately. If the matter is not remedied, you should raise it formally using the Grievance Procedure.

5.3 Staff Raising Malicious Allegations:

However, the School cannot give such assurances and you may be subject to disciplinary action if you raise a concern maliciously or the information you have used to trigger a concern has been obtained unlawfully, for example:

- Legal requirements have not been followed, e.g. the Data Protection Act has been breached or
- Through unauthorised access to records, e.g. computer hacking.

6 How to raise a concern

Points of contact

6.1 As soon as you become reasonably concerned, we hope you will feel able to raise it. The earlier you raise your concern, the easier it is to take action.

6.2 Members of Staff

If you are an employee you should normally raise concerns with your line manager. Similarly, non-employees (e.g. agency workers, contractors, consultants) should raise a concern in the first instance with their contact within the School, usually the person to whom they directly report.

If you are a member of staff and you want to raise the matter with someone other than your immediate manager, for whatever reason, please raise the matter with:

- Rachel Simmonds, Headteacher – 01273 770777 or rachel.simmonds@wblatch.brighton-hove.sch.uk
- Philip Worsfold, Chair of Governors – philip.worsfold@wblatch.brighton-hove.sch.uk
- Carly Regan, Business Manager – 01273 770777 or carly.regan@wblatch.brighton-hove.sch.uk

These people will also be able to advise on confidentiality and further action required.

6.3 Members of the Public

If you are a member of the public you can raise concerns with:

- Rachel Simmonds, Headteacher – 01273 770777 or rachel.simmonds@wblatch.brighton-hove.sch.uk
- Philip Worsfold, Chair of Governors – philip.worsfold@wblatch.brighton-hove.sch.uk
- Carly Regan, Business Manager – 01273 770777 or carly.regan@wblatch.brighton-hove.sch.uk

The Procedure

- 6.4 You may raise your concern orally or in writing. We advise that you make it clear that you are raising your concerns under the School's whistleblowing arrangements.
- 6.5 You are also encouraged to put your name to any concern you raise as this will make it easier for the School to investigate the issue. Please also say if you want to raise the matter in confidence so that the person you contact can make appropriate arrangements.
- 6.6 To enable your concern to be dealt with properly and effectively you will need to provide the following information and to be as clear as possible about:
- What the concern is and to whom it relates
 - The background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates)
 - The reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation and why you believe it to be true.
- 6.7 When raising a concern you are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, however, you will need to demonstrate to the person you contact that there are sufficient grounds for the concern.
- 6.8 If you are a member of staff you may invite your trade union representative or a colleague who works for the School to assist or accompany you. Similarly, if you are a member of the public you may be supported by a colleague or friend. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

7 How the School will respond

- 7.1 Once a concern is raised, the School will respond to your concern as quickly as possible. The appropriate person will make initial enquiries, taking advice from Human Resources if necessary, to help decide if an investigation is appropriate and if so, what form it should take.
- 7.2 The person receiving the concern will ensure the Head Teacher is provided with sufficient details to be aware of the concern raised.
- 7.3 Where appropriate, the matters raised may:
- Be investigated by management, internal audit or through the disciplinary process;
 - Be referred to the Police;
 - Be referred to the external auditor or
 - Form the subject of an independent inquiry

Within 10 working days of a concern being raised, the person handling the matter will write to you acknowledging that the concern has been received, indicating how, as far as possible, it will be dealt with and, if you are a member of staff, the support mechanisms available to you. You will be kept informed of progress and will receive a full and final response, subject to any legal constraints.

- 7.4 When you raise the concern(s) you may be asked how you think the matter might best be resolved. If you have any personal interest in the matter, we ask that you tell us this at the outset. If your concerns would be more appropriately dealt with under another School policy (for example, the Complaints Procedure or Grievance Procedure) we will tell you.

- 7.5 While the purpose of this policy is to enable us to investigate possible malpractice and take appropriate steps to deal with it, we will give you as much feedback as we properly can.
- 7.6 Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example child protection) will normally be referred for consideration under the relevant procedure. Some concerns may be resolved by agreeing action with you without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.
- 7.7 The School will take all reasonable steps to minimise any difficulties that you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are asked to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the School will arrange for you to receive appropriate advice and support.

8 How your concern can be taken further

- 8.1 This Policy is intended to provide you with an avenue to raise concerns with the School. The School hopes that you will be satisfied with the way your concerns are treated and any investigations that may be carried out.

However, if you are not, and feel it is right to take the matter outside the School, please find below a list of possible contact points. If you are a member of staff, Human Resources can provide advice as to the other options.

The following are examples of some of the possible contact points:

- Graham Liddell, Head of Internal Audit or Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis, Executive Lead for Strategy, Governance & Law at Brighton & Hove City Council on 01273 291500.
 - Your trade union (if you are a member of staff)
 - Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations. A list of regulatory bodies can be found in Appendix 1
 - A solicitor
 - The Police
- 8.2 If you are a member of staff, the law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body. It will very rarely, if ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. If you would like independent advice at any stage, you can contact the independent charity Public Concern at Work www.whistleblowing.org.uk on 020 7404 6609. They should be able to give you free and confidential advice about how to raise a concern about serious malpractice at work.

9 Recording, monitoring and reviewing

- 9.1 Rachel Simmonds, Headteacher has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy and for ensuring it is reviewed annually by involving key stakeholders in the process.
- 9.2 A register of all concerns and the outcomes that are brought to the attention of the Rachel Simmonds (in a form which respects your confidentiality) will be maintained by her. All officers designated to look into a concern must ensure that Rachel Simmonds is provided with sufficient details for the register.
- 9.3 Rachel Simmonds will review the register and will report annually to the Governing Body on the use of the policy and concerns raised during the period covered by the report. The report will not identify any person raising concerns under this Policy.

10 If you are dissatisfied

- 10.1 If you are unhappy with our response, remember you can go to the other levels and bodies detailed in this policy.
- 10.2 While we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we will try to handle the matter fairly and properly.

Appendix 1 - Regulatory and Professional and other External Organisations

Health & Safety and Environment Risks

Contact	Details
Environment Agency	Address: Solent and South Downs Area Office, Guildbourne House, Chatsworth Road, Worthing, Sussex, BN11 1LD (South East regional office) Tel: 0370 8506506 Web: www.environment-agency.gov.uk
Health & Safety Executive	Address: Priestley House, Priestley Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG24 9NW (regional office) Tel: 0845 345 0055 Web: www.hse.gov.uk
Food Standards Agency	Address: Aviation House, London WC2B 6NH Tel: 020 7272 8829 Web: www.food.gov.uk

Consumer Rights

Contact	Details
The Serious Fraud Office	Address: 2-4 Cockspur Street, London SW1Y 5BS Tel: 020 7239 7272 Web: www.sfo.gsi.gov.uk

Data Protection and Freedom of Information

Contact	Details
Information Commissioner's Office	Address: Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF Tel: 0303 123 1113 Web: www.ico.org.uk

Healthcare and Social Services

Contact	Details
Care Quality Commission	Address: 2nd Floor, Ridgewort House, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 1RY Tel: 03000 616161 Web: www.cqc.org.uk
Health and Care Professions Council	Address: 184 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BU Tel: 0845 3006184 Web: www.hpc-uk.org
The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)	Address: Gillingham Service Centre & Regional Office, Pear Tree House, 68 West Street, Gillingham, Kent ME7 1EF Tel: 020 7825 2500 Web: www.nspcc.org.uk
Children's Commissioner	Address: Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT Tel: 020 7783 8330 Web: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

Nursing and Midwifery Council (NWC)	Address: 23 Portland Place, London W1B 1PZ Tel: 020 7637 7181 Web: www.nmc.org.uk
General Medical Council (GMC)	Address: Fitness to Practise Directorate, 3 Hardman Street, Manchester, M3 3AW Tel: 0161 923 6602 Web: www.gmc-uk.org
Homes and Communities Agency	Address: Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF Tel: 0300 1234 500 Web: www.homesandcommunities.co.uk

Other Organisations

Contact	Details
The Local Government Ombudsman	Address: PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH Tel: 0300 061 0614 Web: www.lgo.org.uk
Commissioners for Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC)	Address: HM Revenue and Customs, Freepost NAT22785, Cardiff, CF14 5GX Tel: 0800 788 887 Web: www.hmrc.gov.uk
Ofsted	Address: Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD Tel: 0300 123 1231 Web: www.ofsted.gov.uk
Pensions Regulator	Web: www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk
Police	Tel: 101 Emergency: 999 Web: www.police.co.uk
Your Local Councillors	Web: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk

Appendix 2 - Guidance for Managers on how to handle a concern raised under the Whistleblowing Policy

Introduction

The School wants staff to feel confident about raising concerns about malpractice so that it can investigate the matter and take appropriate action at an early stage. Under the Policy, the employee is acting as a witness not a complainant.

The Policy is not intended for staff who wish to raise a grievance.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Where the “whistleblower” wishes their identity to remain confidential, you must not disclose it without their consent. If you receive a telephone call from someone who wishes to remain anonymous, you should explain that it may be more difficult to investigate the matter without their support or for you to provide feedback on their concerns. You should reassure them that you can offer confidentiality.

Role of Managers (including heads and governors)

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns in the first instance with their line manager so it is important that you are familiar with the policy and understand how it works. Staff may be nervous about “whistleblowing” and may need reassurance.

You should outline the process and explain that:

- Raising genuine concerns does not make him/her a troublemaker or disloyal;
- He/she will not be asked to prove that a concern is true, only that it is honestly raised;
- Raising a genuine but unfounded concern is not a disciplinary matter;
- Maliciously raising false concerns is a disciplinary offence;
- Deterring anyone from using the Whistleblowing Policy, or victimising anyone who uses the policy in good faith, is a disciplinary offence;
- If he/she requests confidentiality this will be maintained and his/her identity will not be disclosed without his/her consent;
- If he/she feels he/she may be victimised, he/she should contact you;
- The action you can take to protect the whistleblower;
- How you will feedback on the investigation into his/her concern.

Co-ordination & Monitoring

All concerns raised must be recorded and monitored.

Checklist for handling a concern under the Whistleblowing Policy

1. Assess whether the concern is something that should be raised under this Policy. If not, advise the individual of the appropriate policy to.
2. Allow the individual to discuss the issue over the phone initially if they wish, and reassure them about any concerns they may have about disclosing the information.
3. If you decide that the concern should be dealt with under the Whistleblowing Policy fill in the appropriate form, ideally with the member of staff concerned. If the individual cannot meet with you to do this, ask them to put their concern in writing to you.

4. Inform the Monitoring Officer that a concern has been raised under the Whistleblowing Policy and the nature of the concern. This may be done by forwarding a copy of the completed form. It is important that where the individual has asked for their identity not to be disclosed **you must not** pass his/her name on to anyone else.
5. If it is not possible to inform the Monitoring Officer, inform one of the other senior managers listed in the Whistleblowing Policy.
6. Start a file marked confidential and keep it in a locked drawer or cabinet.
7. Even if anonymity has not been requested only use the name of the “whistleblower “ where this is necessary.
8. Document all contact with the member of staff concerned and summaries of all conversations.
9. Ensure feedback is given to the person raising the concern within 10 working days.
10. If you have been able to investigate and resolve the matter yourself please provide the Monitoring Officer with a brief summary report of your investigation and any steps taken to address the outcome(s). Alternatively, you may feel that the matter is sufficiently serious to refer it to a senior manager or director, who may in turn refer the matter on, for example to Internal Audit, depending upon the nature of the allegation.

Appendix 3 - Guidance for staff on how to raise a concern under the Whistleblowing Policy

The School/Council is committed to the Whistleblowing Policy. We want to hear about and act on any concerns staff may have about unlawful conduct, financial malpractice or dangers to the public or the environment. Your concern may only be a suspicion that you wish to raise in good faith. You won't be regarded as making a complaint but as a witness.

- If you raise a matter in good faith but are mistaken it does not matter. If you raise a genuine concern under the policy you will not suffer any detriment as a result.
- If you do have a personal interest in the matter we ask that you tell us at the outset. If your concern falls more properly within the Grievance Policy we will tell you.
- If you maliciously raise a matter you know to be untrue disciplinary action may be taken against you.
- Although we will attempt to maintain confidentiality, it cannot be guaranteed in all situations (see paragraph below).

Confidentiality

The Council will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern. However, we recognise that you may want to raise a concern in confidence under the Whistleblowing Policy. If you raise a concern, the person you contact will not disclose your name to anyone else without your consent. If the situation arises where we cannot resolve your concern without revealing your identity (for example your evidence is required for court or disciplinary proceedings) we will discuss with you, at the earliest opportunity, whether and how we can proceed.

