College Road
Primary School

COLLEGE ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

June 2024

CHANGES

October 2014:	Version 2: Policy amended to ensure compliance with legislation.
May 2015:	Updated Section 4 *Raising a concern*.
June 2018:	No changes or updates.
May 2021	Contact details updated

If you have any questions regarding this policy please contact your HR Adviser.

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1 POLICY STATEMENT

This policy has been written to comply with the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and supports the school's commitment to providing a safe and supportive working environment.

College Road Primary School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, and accountability. The school also expects a high standard of conduct and integrity from all its employees.

Any member of staff who has a serious concern about any aspect of the school's work or the actions of colleagues should voice their concerns through agreed procedures, without fear of harassment or victimisation.

The school aims to encourage all its employees to feel confident in raising serious concerns and provide appropriate avenues for dealing with them. It aims to ensure that all staff are protected from possible reprisals or disadvantage where they have raised a concern or disclosed information.

2 AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This Policy aims to:

- 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;
- allow employees to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the school's response; and
- reassure them that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in accordance with this procedure.

This policy applies to all employees of the school including staff working for the school on a temporary or casual basis, and trainees. It also covers agency workers, suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the school from their own premises.

There are existing procedures in place to allow staff to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment within the school's Grievance Procedures.

This policy is intended to cover reasonably serious concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) amends the Employment Rights Act 1996 and offers protections to employees from any detriment from their employer that arises from the employee making a protected disclosure ('a qualifying disclosure')

The employee must make a qualifying disclosure. This is any disclosure of information that, in the reasonable belief of the employee making the disclosure, is made in the public interest and tends to show one or more of the following factors:

- that a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed, or is likely to be committed. Examples might be child abuse, the abuse of any other vulnerable clients, theft or fraud,

- that a person has failed, is failing, or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which he is subject. Examples might be breach of contract or breach of statutory requirement,

- that a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur,

- that the health and safety of an individual has been, is being, or is likely to be endangered,

- that the environment has been, is being or likely to be damaged,

- that information tending to show any of the above has been concealed or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

NB: This list is not exhaustive

3 SAFEGUARDS

Harassment or Victimisation

The school recognises 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, or suspected of malpractice. The school will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect staff when they raise a concern. This does not mean that if a member of staff is already the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures, those procedures will be halted as a result of their 'Whistleblowing'.

Confidentiality

The school will do its utmost to protect an individual's identity when they raise a concern and do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be realised and appreciated, however, that the investigation process itself may well reveal the source of the information, and, depending on the outcome, a formal statement by the individual may be required as part of the evidence.

Anonymous Allegations

This policy is designed to encourage staff to put their names to allegations. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the school. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- The seriousness of the issue raised;
- The credibility of the concern; and
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

We recognise that you may nonetheless want to raise a concern in confidence. If you ask us to protect your identity, we will not disclose it without informing you. 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.

Untrue Allegations

If an employee makes an allegation, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If, however, individuals make malicious or vexatious allegations, disciplinary action may be considered and implemented.

4 RAISING A CONCERN

Employees are encouraged to report any concerns to one of the following persons. They are listed in order of preference. However, if the employee believes that any of these persons are implicated in the concern they are raising they should feel free to report to the next most preferred person:

1. Headteacher
2. Chair of Governors

Employees who are unsure about reporting or do not feel at ease raising the concern through the above route are encouraged to seek advice from one of the following:

- Chief Auditor Tel: 01752 306710
- Internal Audit Office Tel: 01752 306712 or 306711
- Head or Assistant Head of Legal Services on Tel: 01752 304330
- Assistant Director for HR & Organisational Development Tel: 01752 307865

Employees may also invite their Trade Union or professional association to raise the concern on their behalf.

Concerns are better raised in writing. The background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, should be set out and the reason why the individual is concerned about the situation. Those who do not feel able to put their concerns in writing may raise the matter verbally with the appropriate officer.

Although staff are not expected to prove the truth of their concern, they will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for concern.

5 HOW THE SCHOOL WILL RESPOND

Within ten working days of a concern being received, the School will contact the employee

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- Indicating how it proposes to deal with the matter;
- Telling the employee whether any initial enquiries have been made;
- Telling the employee whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.

The action taken by the will depend on the nature of the concern.

The matters raised may;

- be investigated internally;
- be referred to the Police;
- be referred to the External Auditors;
- form the subject of an independent inquiry by the Ombudsman.

In order to protect individuals and the School, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of other, existing, procedures (e.g. child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved without the need for investigation. Where a formal investigation is required, it is likely to take the form of an investigation by an appropriate senior member of staff or Internal Audit. In certain cases, the matters raised may be referred to the Police or the school's external auditors for investigation or an independent inquiry could be set up.

The amount of contact between the senior member of staff considering the issues raised and the complainant will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided.

When any meeting is arranged, staff have the right, if they so wish, to be accompanied by a Union or professional association representative or a work colleague who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

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 advise them about the procedure.

The school accepts that staff need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, members of staff will receive information about the outcomes of any investigations.

If an employee is not assured that the matter has been properly addressed, they should contact the Chief Auditor, or consider an alternative method of taking forward a complaint.

6 FOLLOWING UP CONCERNS RAISED

Whatever method of raising a concern has been chosen, effective and efficient communication and support systems are fundamental to the success of the policy and in giving employees confidence that issues which they raise will be thoroughly and conscientiously investigated.

Any concerns raised with Headteachers, the Chair of Governors, or Assistant Director for Education Learning and Families must be notified to Internal Audit immediately, if the concern / allegation involves either potential fraudulent practice or activity that could result in a financial loss to the school or Authority.

Similarly, if a concern raises issues relating to employee or client welfare, Human Resources should be notified or on issues of legality, Legal Services should be notified at the earliest possible opportunity.

7 ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF TAKING FORWARD A COMPLAINT

This policy is intended to provide staff with an avenue to raise concerns within the school. If an individual feels it is right to take the matter outside this process, the following are possible contact points:

- The local City Council member (if you live in the area of the Council);
- The External Auditor;
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations;
- Individuals' solicitors;
- A relevant charity or voluntary organisation
- The Police.

If an employee does take the matter outside the school, they need to ensure that they do not disclose confidential information or that disclosure would be privileged. This should be checked with one of the designated contact points, Internal Audit, Legal Services, Human Resources or if preferred, an outside organisation such as the Ombudsman.

I can confirm that the governors of College Road Primary School have adopted this policy as their own.

Chair of Governors

Sign……

Print……..

Date ……..

Headteacher

Sign……..

Print……..

Date ……..

This policy will next be reviewed on……