



BEECHWOOD
Primary School

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

JANUARY 2024
Spring Term

Approved by: **Leadership & Management Committee**

Date:

Last reviewed on: **January 2024**

Next review due by: **January 2025**

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

1. Introduction:

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within a school, however, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or the establishment. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of a serious issue.

2. Rationale:

Beechwood Primary School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. Our whistleblowing policy supports this commitment. It gives employees and others with genuine concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing in the school, a way to voice those concerns without fear of victimisation. Sometimes people are reluctant to act upon their concerns because they think that they are being disloyal, or because they are afraid that they might be victimised if they speak up.

3. Aims & Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to provide the help and support needed to allow staff to speak up and be confident that it is done safely. Concerns are taken seriously and dealt with promptly and fairly.

Whistleblowing can be described as a disclosure made by an employee, a member of the Governing Body, a contractor, a supplier or a volunteer who has concerns about a danger or illegality that has a public interest to it, usually because it threatens others.

This policy has been developed in line with best practice and aims to:

- Encourage the individual to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice;
- Provide avenues for the individual to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- Provide reassurance that the individual will be protected from possible detriment if he/she has a reasonable belief that any disclosure made is true.

Concerns around Child Protection should be referred through the school Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and procedures.

4. Open Disclosures:

The best culture is one where individuals have sufficient faith in the whistleblowing arrangements and culture of the school to allow them the confidence to make open disclosures. This is where those involved know what the issues are along with who raised them.

This is the aim for Beechwood Primary School and it is hoped that any individual with a whistleblowing concern will feel able to raise their issues openly.

This openness makes it easier to assess the report, gather additional information and carry out an investigation. It also allows any hidden agendas to be identified, helps to prevent 'witch hunts' and reduces the risk of mistrust and paranoia developing within the area being investigated.

5. Confidentiality:

It is recognised that some individuals may not feel that they can make such a report. Where this is the case, the policy provides the whistle blower with the option of requesting that their name remains confidential.

Where confidentiality is requested, the school will do its best to ensure that names are not revealed. This cannot, however, be guaranteed as there are certain circumstances where the name of the whistle blower may be made known for example:

- The report is found to be knowingly false;
- Disclosure is ordered by the courts;
- A formal statement is required as part of a police investigation.

6. Anonymous Allegations/Concerns:

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns in person because those that are expressed anonymously are difficult to investigate. However, anonymous allegations/concerns can be made via the NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline. These anonymous allegations/concerns may be investigated depending on:

- the seriousness of the issue raised;
- the credibility of an allegation;
- the likelihood of being able to confirm the allegation from attributable sources.

7. Process:

How to raise a concern:

1) Speak to any member of SLT or write to the Chair of Governors (contact details are available from the school office).

There are two ways to formally make a whistleblowing disclosure:

- a) Verbally - either face-to-face or by telephone;
- b) Written - either by sending a letter or email to the relevant person.

2) The person raising the concern will be asked to meet to discuss the concerns.

Before the meeting it is helpful to write down what is considered the issue, including;

- names;
- dates;
- places;
- any background information and history;
- whether the issue has already been reported to management and the possible outcome of this.

If there are any other documents that may be helpful, ensure these are included.

3) Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated internally;
- be referred to the police;
- be referred to Cheshire East Council Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- be referred to Human Resources (HR) consultants.

4) School will meet with the person raising the concern within 10 days of the initial meeting to:

- acknowledge that concerns have been received;
- outline an understanding of what the issues are; and
- indicate how it is proposed that the matter is dealt if appropriate.

Although individuals are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for concern.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

The individual may wish to consider discussing their concern with a colleague or their trade union first and they may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) persons who have had the same experience or concerns.

Individuals may wish to invite their trade union, professional association representative or a work colleague to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns they have raised.

If the SLT/Chair of Governors decides that it is appropriate for an investigation to be carried out, advice from the Local Authority will be sought and followed. Where it is necessary to safeguard children or vulnerable adults, the appropriate procedures will be followed. In addition, where it is established that the complaint involves issues of bullying or unlawful discrimination, it will be necessary to seek appropriate professional advice.

Investigations will never be conducted by anyone within the line management structure.

If an investigation is carried out, the person raising the concern will always be informed of the final outcome. It may not always be possible to give the full details of the outcome if it contains personal details of a third party, because the school has the duty to protect personal information under the Data Protection Act.

8. Low Level Concerns:

We understand that the term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern - no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or college may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and;
- does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with children;
- having favourites;
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to school policy;
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door, or

- humiliating pupils.

Low level concerns will be reported in the same way as a concern in relation to concerns and allegations that meet the harms test i.e. to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if the concern is about the headteacher.

Records of low-level concerns will be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified and responded to.

Where a pattern of behaviour is identified, the Headteacher will decide on a course of action. This might be internal disciplinary procedures, or referral to the LADO if the harms threshold is met.

The Headteacher will consider if there are any wider cultural issues in school that enabled the behaviour to occur and if appropriate policies could be revised or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of recurrence.

9. How will the school treat whistleblowers?

- If an allegation is made in good faith but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the person raising the concern. If a malicious allegation is knowingly made, disciplinary legal action may be taken against the person making the allegation.
- Disciplinary action will be taken against any member of staff who tries to stop another from raising a concern or who is responsible for any act of recrimination or victimisation against an employee who raises a concern.
- If a concern is raised, the person raising the concern will be given the opportunity to feed back any issues or problems they may have experienced as a result. This will take place outside their personal line management structure. The purpose of this is to ensure that employees who have raised concerns in good faith do not suffer as a result.
- Staff are encouraged to challenge and re-refer if there remains concerns about a child or they are not improving.

10. Taking Further Advice:

This policy is intended to provide individuals with an avenue to raise concerns within Beechwood and it is hoped that they will utilise it. However, should they feel unable to raise their concerns internally, the following are possible alternative contact points:

- Protect - *Formally Public Concern at Work* - 020 3117 2520
- The Director of Children's Services
- Ofsted
- The Police
- The Department of Education

It is stressed that this list is not exhaustive and individuals are free to contact any organisation they feel will be able to deal properly with their concerns.

10. Outcomes:

This policy promotes the excellent ethos of the school. It will promote the high standards and high expectations set out in the school's aims and values.

This policy should be read and reviewed in the light of operating experience and/or changes in legislation or further issued guidance from the DfE in conjunction with the DfE document (September 2023 version) 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', which is available through www.gov.uk/publications or from the school office.

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Leadership and Management Governor sub-committee, held on _____

Date to be reviewed: January 2025

Signed:

Name of signatory:	S. Harper	J. Cargill
Role of signatory:	Headteacher	Chair of Governors