

Confidential Reporting Policy “Whistleblowing” for Schools



Reviewed: November 2023
Next review: November 2024

1. Introduction

This document should be read in conjunction with the corporate Confidential Reporting Policy on the Council's external website. The corporate policy can be found on Office On line using the following route:

Forms, Data Guidance/Human Resources & Payroll Services/HR policies/Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) – Model policy

The rights & responsibilities outlined within the corporate procedure are inherent within this procedure; this document outlines particular responsibilities for school-based employees.

2. Statement

This Governing Body is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. Any school staff who have serious concerns about the school are expected to come forward and voice those concerns. They will be able to do so in confidence and without fear of reprisal.

3. Legislation

UK Public Disclosure Act 1998 came into force on 2nd July 1999. The Act promotes the public interest.

4. Scope

This policy is additional to the existing mechanisms that exist for raising particular issues e.g. the grievance procedure exists for issues around your own employment, parental complaints are managed through the Governor complaints procedure & Schools Management Team, child protection issues should be directed in the first instance to the Principal Education Welfare Officer.

This procedure covers major concerns as illustrated below:

- Conduct which is an offence or breach of the law
- Disclosures relating to miscarriage of justice
- Health & safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- Damage to the environment
- Unauthorised use of public funds
- Unethical conduct

Thus, any serious concerns you have about the operation of the school or conduct of school staff or members of the Governing Body can be reported under this policy.

5. How to raise a concern

As a first step you should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager or Headteacher. However, depending on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issue it may be appropriate to raise the issue with the Chair of Governors cog@abingdon.stockport.sch.uk. In extreme cases you should approach the Corporate Director for Services to People at the Local Authority (or an appropriate representative).

Concerns are best raised in writing. Staff and volunteers are encouraged to use the following format:

- The background and history of the concern
- The reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation

If you are not able to put your concern in writing you should meet with the appropriate person as detailed above

You are encouraged to put your name to your allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the governing body in line with the corporate guidelines.

You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague or trade union representative, you may wish to bring a representative along to any meetings you may have.

The School recognises that reporting a concern can be difficult. If what you are saying is true you should have nothing to fear. If you raise a concern in good faith you will have nothing to fear.

All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. However, you need to be aware that you may need to come forward as a witness.

6. How the school will respond

The School will respond to your concerns. Do not forget that testing out your concerns is not the same as either accepting or rejecting them.

The school will acknowledge receipt of your concern within one working day, and will respond further within 10 working days.

Where appropriate the matter raised may:

- Be investigated within school
- Be referred to the appropriate Service within the Council for further investigation
- Be referred to the external auditor
- Be referred to the police
- Form the subject of an independent enquiry

If the matter is dealt within school the appropriate member of the school management team or Governing Body will respond to the concern. If the matter is referred to the Council the corporate process will be followed.

If you are not satisfied with any action taken or you feel it is right to take the matter outside the Council, the following are possible contact points:

- your local councillor
- the external auditor
- your solicitor
- your trade union
- your local Citizens Advice Bureau
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations

- a relevant voluntary organisation (e.g. Public Concern at Work 020 7406 6609)
- the police
- the Audit Commission via a special telephone hotline 0171 630 1019

If you do take the matter outside the Council, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information. Check with the contact point about that.