Whistleblowing Policy

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Signed	
Chair of Governors:	
Executive Headteacher:	

CHASE BRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Contents

1. Aims **3**

2. Legislation **3**

3. Definition of Whistleblowing **3**

3.1 Support for Employees **4**

4. Procedure for staff to raise a whistleblowing concern **4**

4.2 Who to report to **4**

4.3 How to raise the concern **4**

5. Procedure for responding to a whistleblowing concern **5**

5.1 Investigating the concern **5**

5.2 Outcome of the investigation **5**

6. Malicious or vexatious allegations **6**

7. Escalating concerns beyond the school **6**

7.1 Referral outside the Council **6**

8. Approval **7**

9. Links with other policies **7**

Appendix 1 Summary 8

Introduction, aims, purpose of policy

1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Encourage individuals affected to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and that their confidentiality will be respected;
- Let all staff in the school know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the school;
- Set clear procedures for how the school will respond to such concerns;
- Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistleblowing concern;
- Assure staff that they will not be victimised for raising a legitimate concern through the steps set out in the policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken (though vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue); and for
- Staff to be aware of the role of the Head of School or Executive Headteacher (monitoring officer) at Chase Bridge is the headteacher Daniel Bishop.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the school in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

2. Legislation

This policy has been written in line with the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by PIDA 1998) and relevant Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)., as well as government guidance on whistleblowing.

3. Definition of Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is "in the public interest". Examples of whistleblowing include (but are not limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption;
- Pupils' or staff health and safety being put in danger;
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement;
- Breaches of financial management procedures;
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest; and
- Damage to the environment.

Safeguarding or child protection concerns, including failure to follow child protection procedures, systemic safeguarding risks, or situations where a concern about a child or an allegation against a staff member/leadership is not being properly addressed.

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the school count as whistleblowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistleblowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

When staff have a concern they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures.

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) has:

- Further guidance on the difference between a whistleblowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure; and
- A free and confidential advice line.

3.1 Support for Employees

The Council also provides an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for members of staff which can provide support including regarding employment issues, consumer rights.
This service is free to employees and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Contact details are:
Telephone: 0800 243 458 or http://www.workplaceoptions.com/member-login-2/
Username: richmond
Password: employee

4. Procedure for staff to raise a whistleblowing concern

4.1 When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples in section 3 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistleblowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or school procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

4.2 Who to report to

Staff should report their concern to the Head of School or Executive Headteacher, sometimes known as the Monitoring Officer. If the concern is about the headteacher or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the chair of the governing body, Mr Tony Meehan via tmeehan@chasebridge.richmond.sch.uk or via 0208 892 1242.

Safeguarding & Child Protection Whistleblowing: If staff have a whistleblowing concern regarding child safety, child protection procedures, or allegations against staff/leadership that are not being dealt with appropriately, they should report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Executive Headteacher.

If the concern involves the Executive Headteacher or DSL, or if staff feel that a safeguarding concern is not being appropriately investigated internally, staff should contact: Mr Tony Meehan via tmeehan@chasebridge.richmond.sch.uk or via 0208 892 1242.
or The NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline on 0800 028 0285 or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

4.3 How to raise the concern

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

5. Procedure for responding to a whistleblowing concern

5.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the headteacher or Chair of Governors- referred to from here as the 'recipient' - they will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union or professional association representative;
- Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting, and record the information. If it becomes apparent the concern is not of a whistleblowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure;
- Reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern. If the concern is found to be malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action may be taken (see section 6 of this policy);
- Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there is:
    - The recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the headteacher and/or chair of governors if appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. In other cases, they may need to report the matter to the police
    - The person who raised the concern should be informed of how the matter is being investigated and an estimated timeframe for when they will be informed of the next steps

5.2 Outcome of the investigation

Once the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the investigating person(s) will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether or not any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified, and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority or police.

They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.

Beyond the immediate actions, the headteacher, governors and other staff, if necessary, will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

6. Malicious or vexatious allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an issue. If an allegation is made in the reasonable belief that it is in the public interest. but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

7. Escalating concerns beyond the school

The school encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with section 4 of this policy, but recognises that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included here.

If you are not satisfied with the action taken by the Head of School or Executive Headteacher (Monitoring Officer) and feel it is right to question the matter further may consider the following possible contact points:

- External Auditor
- the employee's Trade Union
- the Citizens Advice Bureau and / or law centre / firm
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- the Local Government Ombudsman
- the Information Commissioner
- a relevant voluntary organisation
- the Police and/ or Health and Safety Executive

The Protect advice line, linked to in section 3 of this policy, can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.

If your concerns involve potential fraud or criminal activities the Councils Fraud hotline 020 8871 8383 or email swlfp@richmondandswandsworth.gov.uk

7.1 Referral outside the Council

In exceptional circumstances you may consider the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the school. In this instance, depending on the nature of the concern, the matter could be directed to the police or local MP (contact through directory enquiries or local telephone directory).

The Comptroller and Auditor General is a prescribed person, to whom external persons can make disclosures relating to "the proper conduct of public business, value for money, fraud and corruption in relation to the provision of public services". Their Whistleblowing hotline 020 7798 7999. The Act does not require the C&AG to investigate every disclosure s/he receives; their decision whether to investigate is based upon various criteria designed to ensure the most effective use of the resources at their disposal in safeguarding the public interest.

The Comptroller and Auditor General
National Audit Office
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road
London SW1W 9SP

The council's external auditor is Grant Thornton:
http://www.Grantthornton.com/UK/

NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline (0800 028 0285 / help@nspcc.org.uk)

The Local Government Ombudsman can also be contacted, they will not however, take any action until the allegation has been dealt with internally first. They can be contacted at:

- http://www.lgo.org.uk/
- Tel: 0300 061 0614 or
- Text 'call back' to 0762 481 1595.

8. Approval

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or if guidance changes require it to be updated. These procedures have been agreed by the governors, who will approve them whenever reviewed.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff Grievance Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Safeguarding and Child protection policy

Appendix 1 Summary

DO

- Make an immediate note of your concerns:
    - Note all relevant details, such as what was said in telephone or other conversations, the date, time, and the names of the parties involved
    - Note any documentary evidence that may exist to support your claim but do not interfere with this evidence.
- Report your concerns to the Head of School or Executive Headteacher, (Monitoring Officer).
- Deal with the matter quickly. Any delay could allow the problem to continue and escalate and evidence to disappear.
- Think about risks and outcomes before you act.
- Follow the guidance provided and contact the appropriate officer.

DON'T

- Do nothing and let it go unreported.
- Be afraid of raising concerns.
- Approach and accuse individuals directly.
- Try and investigate the matter yourself.
- Convey your suspicions to anyone except those of the proper authority as set out in this policy.
- Use the Whistleblowing Policy to pursue a personal grievance.

IF IN DOUBT – RAISE IT!