



Our moral obligation is to help our children become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens, and we believe that this policy for Confidential Reporting, will help us achieve this goal.

Confidential Reporting (West Sussex County Council (WSCC) Adopted Policy)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within their school. However, they may not say anything because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the school's managers. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. It may be easier for them to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.
- 1.2 The school is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. So we expect employees, and others we deal with, who have serious concerns about the school's work to come forward and voice them.
- 1.3 It is recognised that many cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

This policy document makes it clear that you can raise concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. This Confidential Reporting Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within a school rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside. These rules are important but underlying the rules is the commitment of the school's governing body that the school should have and encourage a culture of improvement and openness, and not control and blame.

- 1.4 The policy applies to all employees (regardless of contract type), volunteers, interns, secondees and those contractors working on school premises, for example, agency staff, builders and drivers. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the school in their own premises.
- 1.5 These procedures do not stand-alone and are in addition to, for example, the school's grievance procedures and other personnel procedures as well as the complaints and other relevant reporting procedures agreed by Trustees. Where other procedures are activated simultaneously, a clear agreement will be reached between the responsible person who is investigating the concern and the individual making the report about the separate procedures, with agreed programmes for each and an agreement as to whether or not information can be shared for the purposes of each procedure.
- 1.6 The original WSCC policy has been discussed with the relevant trade unions and professional organisations and has their support.

2. Aims and Scope of this Policy

- 2.1 There are existing procedures in place for you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment. The Confidential Reporting Policy is intended to cover major concerns that may fall outside those procedures. These include:
 - conduct which is a criminal offence or a breach of law;
 - disclosures related to miscarriages of justice;
 - health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees;





- damage to the environment;
- the unauthorised use of public funds;
- possible fraud and corruption;
- sexual, physical or verbal abuse; and
- other unethical conduct.

You are entitled to seek advice about which procedure is most appropriate for your concern, in which case you should contact one of the people listed in para. 6.2.

2.2 Thus, any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of staff employed by the school or others acting on behalf of it can be reported under the Confidential Reporting Policy. This may be about something that:

- makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe the school subscribes to; or
- is against the School's Standing Orders and policies or
- amounts to improper conduct.

You do not have to refer to the Confidential Reporting Policy to have an issue or complaint dealt with under the Policy.

2.3 This policy aims to:

- encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice;
- provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied; and
- reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure in the public interest.

3. Safeguards: Harassment or Victimisation

3.1 The Trustee body is committed to good practice and high standards, and wants to be supportive of employees.

3.2 The Trustee body recognise that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If you believe what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and those for whom you are providing a service.

3.3 The Trustee body will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern with a reasonable belief and in the public interest.

3.4 Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence, or be influenced by, disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect you.

4. Confidentiality





- 4.1 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness, or agree to your identity being disclosed, or the details of your concerns shared with others.
- 4.2 This policy encourages you to put your name to your concerns whenever possible.
- 4.3 Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the School's Leadership.
- 4.4 In exercising this discretion, the factors to be considered would include:
- the seriousness of the issues raised;
 - the credibility of the concern; and
 - the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.
- 4.5 The responsible person leading the investigation may ask you to explain your original concern in further detail if his/her investigation fails to substantiate it.

5. False or Unproven Allegations

- 5.1 If you express a concern with a reasonable belief of a potential breach, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you.
- 5.2 If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

6. How to Raise A Concern

6.1

- As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager or their line manager. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the misconduct.
- If the employee believes their line manager is involved then they should approach the Head Teacher
- If the employee believes the Head Teacher is involved then they should approach the Chair of Trustees
- If the employee believes the Chair of Trustees is involved then they should approach the Head Teacher who will approach the Chair of the Members. However, if the employee believes the Chair of Trustees and the Head Teacher are involved then the employee should make direct contact with the Chair of Members
- It is also possible to approach external organisations listed in 7.0 if an employee wishes to raise a concern outside of school

Concerns may be raised orally initially but should be recorded in writing. Staff who wish to make a written report are invited to use the following format:

- the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates); and
- the reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation.

- 6.2 The earlier you express the concern the easier it is to take action.





- 6.3 Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for concern.
- 6.4 Once contact has been made an initial assessment of the complaint will lead to a decision about whether further investigation is needed, whether a different procedure should be used or whether the complaint does not justify further action. You will be kept informed of the outcome.

7.0 Contacts For Independent External Advice

7.1 Safeguarding

The current LADO contacts are Donna Tomlinson and Miriam Williams (Contact no: 0330 222 6450 and contact email address LADO@WestSussex.gov.uk)

Public Concern at Work: www.pcaw.co.uk

Email at whistle@pcaw.co.uk, helpline@pcaw.co.uk

Tel no: 0207 404 6609.

National Audit Office whistleblowing hotline: Tel. No: 020 7798 7999

- 7.2 You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first and you might find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns.
- 7.3 You may invite your trade union, professional association representative or a friend to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised. Anyone who helps you will need to respect the confidentiality of the investigation.

8.0 How the School will respond

- 8.1 The School will respond to your concerns.
- 8.2 The person you contact will either deal with your issue or nominate someone to do so who will not have been involved in the issue themselves and will know how to carry forward this policy. This may involve an interview to take a detailed account of your concerns and any evidence available.
- 8.3 Where appropriate, the matters raised may:
- be investigated by the School Leadership, internal audit, or through the disciplinary process;
 - be referred to the police;
 - be referred to the external auditor; and
 - form the subject of an independent inquiry, for example, through the Local Safeguarding Board for child abuse.
- 8.4 In order to protect individuals who may be the subject of your concern and people against whom allegations of misdeeds or possible malpractice are being made, the investigation lead will make initial enquiries to decide whether a fuller investigation is appropriate. He/she will also decide what form the investigation should take.





- 8.5 If the concern is about vulnerable individuals, or a criminal activity, action will be taken promptly to protect the individual and prevent further offences. The overriding principle which the School will have in mind is the public interest. If the person nominated to deal with your issue finds aspects of the concerns fall outside the scope of this Policy, but which still need to be addressed, they will normally be referred for consideration, but will not be allowed to delay the investigation under the Policy.
- 8.6 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.
- 8.7 Within ten working days of a concern being raised with the person dealing with your issue they:
- (i) will write to you
 - acknowledging that the concern has been received;
 - indicating how we propose to deal with the matter;
 - giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
 - telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made;
 - supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms; and
 - telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.
 - (ii) will inform, as appropriate the Head Teacher, Chair of Trustees or Chair of Members that an issue has been raised under this policy.
- 8.8 Where any meeting is arranged, off-site if you so wish, you can be accompanied by a trade union or professional association representative or a friend.
- 8.9 The School will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the School will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure and where appropriate financial or other support.
- 8.10 The School accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly investigated. Thus, subject to legal constraints, we will inform you of the outcome of any investigation.

9. How the Matter Can Be Taken Further

- 9.1 This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the school to raise concerns. The Local Authority hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not, and if you feel it is right to take the matter outside the Local Authority, the following are possible contact points:
- the external auditor;
 - your trade union;
 - your local Citizens' Advice Bureau;
 - relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations;
 - a relevant voluntary organisation;
 - the police;
 - the local County Councillor (where appropriate);
 - [other appropriate authorities](#).





9.2 If you do take the matter outside the Local Authority, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information.

Key Contacts

Tony Occleshaw – Chair of Trustees – occleshaw@me.com

Richard Wallace – Chair of Members - email available through Clerk to Trustees

