



Moorfield

Moorfield Primary School

Vibrant Loving Proud

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

(Confidential Reporting Code)

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Moorfield Primary School Safeguarding Statement

“Moorfield Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and visitors to share this commitment.”

Moorfield Primary School Equality Statement

“Moorfield Primary School promotes equal opportunities for all pupils, staff and service users. We ensure that all persons have equal access to the full range of opportunities provided by the school. We celebrate diversity and actively encourage respect for all as well as promoting fairness and justice in the education that we provide.”

SCOPE

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within any workplace. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the School. 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 malpractice.

This policy has been adapted by Moorfield Primary School from one that applies to all employees and contractors working for the Halton Borough Council on Council premises. It covers all school staff, volunteers and governors, making it clear that any of them can report their concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. This is a Confidential Reporting Policy which is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the Council rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

AUTHORITY

Halton Borough Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment the Local Authority expects employees, and others that the Council deals with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Council's work, to come forward and voice those concerns. This includes any issues relating to gender and race, whereby a person suspects discrimination is occurring. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

Moorfield Primary School complies fully with this policy and, like the Council, is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability.

This policy has been discussed with the relevant trade unions and professional organisations and has their support. This policy is an addition to other complaints & statutory procedures that apply to various Council services. It is particularly relevant to the safeguarding of children within the school.

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Any serious concerns that a members of the school staff or Governing Body has about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of those who are providing services within the school can be reported under the Confidential Reporting Policy.

This may result from actions or behaviour that makes employees feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards to which they believe the School / Council subscribes, key elements of the safeguarding policy or their own experience. The list on the following page is not meant to be exhaustive but gives examples of malpractice. The overriding concern for the employer and employee should be that it would be in the public interest for the malpractice to be corrected and, if appropriate, sanctions will be taken.

An employee's concerns may in this context relate to any of the matters listed below, or there is a reasonable belief that one or more of the following has occurred or is likely to occur:

1. Practice that falls below established standards of practice or amounts to improper conduct.

2. Conduct which is a criminal offence or a breach of the law
3. Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice.
4. Dangerous procedures risking health and safety, including risks to the public, children and / or other employees.
5. Damage to the environment.
6. The unauthorised use of public funds, fraud or corruption.
7. Sexual or physical abuse of service users.
8. Other unethical conduct.

Thus any serious concern that an employee has about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of anyone acting on behalf of the School can be reported under this Policy.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

The overall aims are:

- To encourage everyone to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice.
- To provide avenues for those concerns to be raised and receive feedback on any action taken.
- To ensure that those who raise the concerns receive an appropriate response and are aware of how to pursue them if dissatisfied with this response.
- To reassure those who choose to make a report they are protected from possible reprisals or victimisation by the Council if they have a reasonable belief that they have made any disclosure in good faith.

The policy must be written and circulated to every employee, states to whom and what it applies and provides for matters to be dealt with quickly. The key objectives of the policy must be made clear. These are:

- The School is committed to tackling issues of malpractice and will ensure that employees know that malpractice will be dealt with seriously.
- This policy has the support of Trade Unions and will be accompanied by clear procedures which state who will deal with allegations and how they will be dealt with.
- Employees are reminded that they can seek the help of their Union or professional body.
- The policy aims to ensure the confidentiality of any allegations and actions taken, as far as is reasonably practicable.
- Efforts will be made to ensure that allegations and responses to them are properly recorded .

This policy support the following statement from the ‘Policy of Conduct for Local Government Employees’

“Employees will be expected through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of service. Employees must report to the appropriate manager any impropriety or breach of procedure.

RESPONSIBILITY

The Governors have the overall responsibility to ensure that all aspects of the Whistleblowing Policy and procedure are undertaken correctly with confidentiality fully assured for anyone who invokes it.

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring the policy is conducted in a correct and effective manner with confidential records being kept and issues discussed with appropriate personnel.

All Staff must make themselves aware of the policy and the circumstances in which it may be used.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

This policy is closely related to the following school documents:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education; Statutory guidance for schools and colleges (Sept 2018)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Jul 2018)
- What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused (March 2015)
- Information Sharing (DfE: 2015)
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Behaviour and Anti-bullying Policy
- Comments, Compliments & Complaints Policy & Procedure
- Harassment and Discrimination Policy

Signed (Headteacher):

Date:

Signed (Chair of Governors):

Date:

APPENDIX: HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL WHISTLEBLOWING PROCEDURES

1. SAFEGUARDS AGAINST HARRASSMENT OR VICTIMISATION

- i. The Council is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees.
- ii. The Council recognises that the decision to report a concern can be difficult one to make. If what you are saying is true, or your suspicion reasonable, 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.
- iii. The Council will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.
- iv. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect you.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY

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.

The employee disclosing a concern should ensure that they only inform the person identified in Part 5 below. Other than that the employee is required to keep the matter disclosed confidential.

The person to whom the matter is disclosed will treat it confidentially, as far as is reasonably practicable.

It is stated explicitly here that if the procedure used requires disclosure to other people, then the employee who disclosed this should be informed.

If the matter cannot be resolved locally by the person to whom it is reported, it may be necessary to inform other people of the concern raised. These people should only be those required to know under whatever procedure the matter progresses.

If a hearing is needed, either by law, or under a Council procedure, the employee disclosing the concern may be required to give evidence.

It is not possible to remain anonymous under this procedure, but the safeguards stated here are aimed at protecting all those involved in reporting, investigating and being suspected of wrongdoing.

3. ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

- i. This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.

ii. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the Council.

iii. In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:

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

4. UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

5. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

i. As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager or their superior. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. For example, if you believe that management is involved, you should approach the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer (i.e. the Council Solicitor), Strategic Director - Corporate and Policy, Internal Audit or any specialist units the Council may have established (for example an Anti-Fraud Team or a complaints 'hot-line').

ii. Concerns may be raised orally or 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);
- the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

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

iv. 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 your concern.

v. Advice/guidance on how to pursue matters of concern may be obtained from:

- Chief Executive
- Monitoring Officer
- Strategic Director - Corporate and Policy
- Chief Internal Auditor
- Chair of the Standards Committee (who can be contacted by a letter addressed to the Chair of the Standards Committee and sent to the Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes, WA8 7QF)
- You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first and you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns.

vi. 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.

6. HOW THE COUNCIL WILL RESPOND

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

ii. Where appropriate, the matters raised may be:

- Investigated by management
- Investigated by internal audit
- Progressed through the disciplinary process
- Referred to the Police
- Referred to the external auditor
- The subject of an independent enquiry
- Dealt with via any other appropriate procedure for example, child protection, abuse of vulnerable adults procedure.

iii. In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle which the Council will have in mind is the public interest. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

iv. If someone is suspended, the person reporting under this policy will be informed.

v. 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.

vi. Within five working days of a concern being raised, the Chief Executive (or other officer appointed to deal with the matter) 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 full 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.

vii. The amount of contact between you and the officers considering the issues will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the Council will seek further information from you.

viii. Where any meeting is arranged, off-site if you so wish, you can be accompanied by a union or professional association representative or a friend.

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Headteacher: Miss K Heyes B.Ed Hons, NPQH



ix. The Council 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 Council will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.

x. The Council accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, we will inform you of the outcome of any investigation.

7. THE RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. That officer maintains a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger your confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Council.

8. HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

i. This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the Council to raise concerns. The Council 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 Council, the following are possible contact points:

- the Chair of the Standards Committee
- the external auditor
- your trade union
- your local Citizens' Advice Bureau
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations (eg for adult and children's social care services, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (tel. 020 7979 2000))
- a relevant voluntary organisation (e.g. For Children's Services – The Children's Society (tel. 020 7841 4400))
- the police.

ii. 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.