

## Whistleblowing Policy

### Whitley Bay High School Whistleblowing Policy

#### 1. Introduction

The Governing Body of Whitley Bay High School is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, honesty and professionalism in the workplace and in doing so complying with its legal obligations. Whilst the Governing Body will make every effort to ensure that its business is conducted according to these standards, staff or other workers may become aware of, or suspect, certain failures or wrongdoings.

The Governing Body recognise their duty in such circumstances to ensure staff and other workers, who raise concerns under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), do so without fear of victimisation or detriment. Governors wish to encourage the raising of serious concerns within the remit of this policy where the following criteria are met:

- The individual raising the concern is a 'worker' covered by the Act
- The concern raised is of the right type (a 'qualifying disclosure')
- The concern is revealed to the right person, and in the right way (making it a 'protected disclosure')

Governors recognise that there may be occasions where someone may not meet these criteria. In such circumstances you are reminded of alternative routes to raise your concerns shown in section 9 of this policy. If you are in doubt we would always encourage contact with the Headteacher regarding any concerns in the first instance.

#### 2. Who is covered by this policy

The Governing Body recognises that this policy is applicable only to “workers” as defined by the PIDA and as such you must meet one of the following criteria:

- You are an employee of the school
- You are an agency worker or trainee on work experience within school
- You work for a third party employer interacting with the school

Where you meet one of these definitions of a “worker” then any serious concern that qualifies under this policy is encouraged to be disclosed and the Governing Body will protect you against any detrimental treatment.

#### 3. What “qualifying disclosures” are covered by this policy

A worker as defined above needs to ensure that the information they wish to disclose meets certain defined criteria. Only through meeting these criteria will a disclosure fall within the remit of this policy. To ensure that a “Qualifying Disclosure” is made you should reasonably believe that the disclosure of information relates to a serious action in one or more of the following areas:

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- A criminal offence
- Breach of a legal obligation
- Miscarriage of justice
- Danger to the Health & Safety of any individual
- Damage to the environment
- Any deliberate concealment of the above matters

By releasing such information in good faith and in an appropriate way a member of staff or other worker can be assured of protection against detrimental treatment through this policy.

#### 4. Ensuring a “Protective Disclosure” through this policy

Where in good faith you believe one of the above events has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen in the near future, you should raise the issue in the first instance informally with your line manager within school. The Governing Body will expect your manager to assess the nature of the concern and take appropriate action and inform you of the outcome.

Where you feel that it is inappropriate to approach your immediate manager, or where you believe they have failed to act appropriately in assessing your concern, then you should approach a designated manager approved by the Governing Body to hear “whistleblowing” concerns within school. Where you are not an employee of the school, but are covered by this policy, then concerns must also be raised with this designated manager.

Governors have determined that the designated manager for our school will be the Headteacher. Where the Headteacher is involved in the concern you wish to raise then the information should be disclosed to the Chair of Governors.

Once the designated manager is notified of the concern they will have responsibility to ensure it is taken seriously and an appropriate assessment undertaken. The designated manager will keep you informed of the progress and inform you of any actions they may deem necessary to resolve your concern.

#### 5. Timescales for assessing a disclosure

Once a concern has been formally raised with the designated manager you will, within 5 Standard School Days of a disclosure being received, be given a letter from the designated manager inviting you to a meeting to discuss your concern in detail. This meeting will be within 10 Standard School Days of the date of initial disclosure. To speed up any assessment of your concerns you should set out in writing the background detail and reasons for your concern and make these available prior to this meeting.

Following this meeting the designated manager will continue with their assessment of your concern and write back to you with their conclusions within 10 Standard School Days of the meeting. If the assessment is likely to take longer than this you will be informed of the reasons and any amended timeframe for conclusion.

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You are entitled to be accompanied to any meeting that you attend in connection with the assessment by a work colleague or a trade union representative. Equally, the designated manager may be supported by Human Resources, as required.

### 6. Confidentiality

The Governing Body view confidentiality as a two-way process and will endeavour to maintain this approach, though we recognise this cannot always be guaranteed. In return we would expect concerns you have raised through this policy will remain equally confidential until there has been an opportunity for their assessment. We also wish to state that although a concern may also be raised anonymously, it may impede the designated manager's ability to undertake a thorough assessment if you choose to do so. We would hope that the protection provided by this policy would negate the need for such actions.

### 7. Reporting arrangements

The Governing Body has determined that it will receive an annual report on the number of referrals under this policy from the Headteacher. Where specific concerns have been validated the staffing committee will support the Headteacher in implementing any required actions, as appropriate.

### 8. External Referral

Only in exceptional circumstances will the Governing Body approve the disclosure of concerns outside of school unless having first provided an opportunity to address them through the above procedure. However, where you feel you are unable to raise your concerns through the above procedure then you may consider raising them with an appropriate external regulatory authority as prescribed by the Government. A list of external regulators can be found at the following internet address <http://www.pcaw.co.uk/law/lawregulatorses.htm> or can be obtained from Public Concern at Work, Suite 301, 6 Baldwins Gardens, London EC1N 7RJ or by phoning their helpline on 020 7404 6609.

**Where a disclosure is made outside of the scope of this policy or in direct breach of this policy, you will not be protected. If a disclosure is made knowing it is untrue or for personal gain then you may be subject to disciplinary action under the school disciplinary policy.**

### 9. Alternatives to Whistleblowing

Where you are not a worker covered by this policy, (for example you are a parent, school volunteer, member of the public or school governor), but you wish to raise a serious concern then you should discuss this with the appropriate member of staff or failing this, the Headteacher. If following this informal route you still have serious concerns, then you should consider action through the school complaints procedure.

Where you are a worker covered by this policy, but the concern relates to an internal school procedure or act that has a direct effect on you as a member of staff, then governors would expect that member of staff to raise these concerns through the school grievance procedure.

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