Sharples Primary School

Policy For
Whistleblowing

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Contents

Section		Page
1	Introduction	3
2	Scope and definition	3
3	The school’s comments	3
4	Safeguards; confidentiality and witness protection	4
5	How to raise an issue by whistleblowing	4
6	How the school will respond	4
7	Help and support in raising an issue	5
8	How the matter can be taken further	5
9	The responsible officer	6

Appendix		Page
A	Identify concerns or issues	7
B	Steps in making a disclosure	8

1 Introduction

1.1 Sharples Primary School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees and others that we deal with who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work, or those who work for the school, to come forward and voice those concerns.

1.2 This policy document explains how people can raise concerns, or whistleblow, without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.

2 Scope and definition

2.1 The Whistleblowing Policy describes how individuals may make a disclosure when they have reasonable grounds to believe there is illegal, immoral, irregular, dangerous or unethical activity occurring under the school's control. For example:

- 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 or physical abuse of pupils
- other unethical conduct

2.2 The policy applies to all employees, volunteers and those contractors working for the school on school premises, for example, Governors, agency staff, builders. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the school in their own premises.

2.3 The Whistleblowing Policy specifically covers those matters where it is in the public interest for an individual to raise concerns. Matters that relate to an individual's own employment must be raised through the grievance procedure. Issues about service quality should be made through the school's complaints procedure.

3 The school's comments

3.1 Under the terms of this policy the school gives an assurance that:

- those who raise a concern will be listened to and heard
- employees who raise concerns within the scope of this policy will be protected from any detriment to their employment for doing so, in accordance with the law
- concerns will be thoroughly investigated
- appropriate actions will be taken in a timely manner when deemed necessary
- feedback will be provided to the whistleblower

4 Safeguards; confidentiality and witness protection

4.1 The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. All concerns will be treated, as far as possible, in the strictest confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the whistleblower's identity if they so wish. However, if concerns require any further action, the individual may at some future date have to act as a witness in proceedings.

4.2 The School will not tolerate or allow any form of harassment, victimisation or discrimination (including informal pressures) against those who whistleblow and will take appropriate action to protect individuals who raise a concern. If there are any intimidatory threats or instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination against a whistleblower the school will take appropriate action against the individual(s) concerned.

4.3 If an allegation is not confirmed by the investigation no action will be taken against the person that raised the issue. Action may, however, be taken against those who have been found to have made allegations frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain.

5 How to raise an issue by whistleblowing

5.1 Concerns should be raised at the earliest opportunity.

5.2 As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with the Head Teacher. 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 the Head Teacher is involved, you should approach the Chair of Governors in the first instance who may, depending on the circumstances, have to liaise with the Director of Children's Services.

5.3 Concerns should be lodged in writing where possible, using the form provided in Appendix A. Verbal reports should provide the same information requested on the form. Although whistleblowers are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds for concern.

5.4 This policy encourages people to put their name to allegations as far as possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the school.

6 How the school will respond

6.1 The school will respond to all concerns raised under the terms of this policy.

6.2 Where appropriate, the matters raised may be:

- investigated by appropriate representatives, internal audit, or through the disciplinary process

- referred to the police
- referred to the external auditor

6.3 Where further investigation is required this may involve:

- a detailed internal investigation by appropriate management representatives and professionals, with reference to the disciplinary policy if appropriate
- referral of the matter to the police
- referral to the external auditor
- an independent inquiry

6.4 Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection, adult abuse, or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under these procedures.

6.5 Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the person who has raised the issue will be written to in confidence to:

- acknowledge that the concern has been received
- explain how we propose to deal with the matter and why
- indicate how long we think any investigation will take
- explain any further information or involvement we require from them
- supply information about support mechanisms

7 Help and support in raising an issue

7.1 The school is committed to supporting those who escalate a concern under this policy.

7.2 Further advice and guidance for staff is available on a confidential basis from the School's HR service. Employees who are members of a trade union are also encouraged to discuss the matter with their trade union representative in the first instance.

8 How the matter can be taken further

8.1 This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the school to raise concerns. The school 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 school, the following are possible contact points, this list is not exhaustive;

- The Director of Children's Services
- The Health and Safety Executive
- The Financial Services Authority
- H M Customs and Excise
- The Inland Revenue
- The Police
- The District Auditor
- The Ombudsman

8.2 If you do take the matter outside the school, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information. Check with School's HR before disclosing any information.

9 The responsible officer

9.1 The Head Teacher or Chair of Governors has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. They will maintain 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 school.

APPENDIX A

Identify concerns or issues

Your Contact Details			
Name			
Address	Line 1	Line 2	
	Line 3	Town or City	Postcode
Telephone	Home	Work	Mobile

Concerns		
Please provide details of your concerns. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.		
What concern(s) do you wish to raise?		
Why are you concerned about the issue(s)?		
Have you discussed the issue(s) with anyone else? Yes ☐ No ☐		
If so, who with?	**What date did you discuss this?**	
What was the outcome of this discussion?		

Signed	**Date**

APPENDIX B

Steps in making a disclosure

