

A Learning Community driven by High Expectations and Respect for all.

Whistle-blowing policy

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy is intended to provide a means for employees who are concerned about standards, conduct, financial irregularity or possible unlawful action to be able to report those concerns in a way that will not be seen as being disloyal to their colleagues or to the School and in a way that will avoid the fear harassment or victimisation.
- 1.2 The 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 to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.
- 1.3 This document makes it clear that you can do so without fear of harassment, subsequent victimisation or discrimination, or disadvantage. This Whistle blowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the School rather than overlooking a problem or „blowing the whistle“ outside.
- 1.4 The Policy applies to all employees and those contractors working for the School 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.

2. AIMS AND SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

- 2.1 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.
 - 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 good faith.
- 2.2 There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment. The Whistle blowing Policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:

- conduct, which is an 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.
- the unauthorised use of public funds.
- possible fraud and corruption.
- sexual or physical or verbal abuse of service users, or □ other unethical conduct.
- where authority is being abused.

2.3 Thus, any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of School's provision or the conduct of staff or Governors of the School or others acting on behalf of the School can be reported under the Whistle blowing 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 □ falls below established standards of practice; or
- amounts to improper conduct.

3. SAFEGUARDS

3.1 Harassment or Victimisation

3.1.1 The School is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees.

3.1.2 The School recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If however, what you have reported has been done so in good faith, 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.

3.1.3 The School will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressure) and will take appropriate action to protect and support you when you raise a concern in good faith. The support provided will be determined in agreement with you.

3.1.4 Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any 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.

5. ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

5.1 This policy, and the School, encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible as anonymous allegations may often be difficult to substantiate/prove.

5.2 Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the School. In order to help you decide whether or not an issue should be raised, you may, in the first instance wish to discuss it with a

Support Worker or Trade Union representative, or with someone who you feel that you have trust in their judgement. It may be that whomever you confide in may feel more comfortable taking the matter forward on your behalf. You may also find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience(s).

5.3 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.

6. UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

6.1 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.

7. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

3.1 As a first step, you may feel that the matter should be raised with your immediate manager or their superior. However, this may depend 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 it would be inappropriate for you to raise the matter directly with your immediate manager/supervisor. For these reasons a range of alternative reporting methods have been put in place to enable you to raise the matter through the source that you feel most comfortable with, which are as follows:

Sarah Copcutt – HR Officer – tel ext 350
J Ellins – Business Manager – tel ext 212
Monica Austin – Head teacher – tel ext 201
Steven Dolby Chair of Governors tel –
Hazel Burgess – Personnel Manager – tel. 01525 713362
Christine Marshall – Audit Manager – tel. 547042

If and an employee would like independent advice, he/she can contact the following external bodies: -

Public Concern at Work	Tel. No. 0207 404 6609
Audit Commission	Tel No. 0207 630 1019

3.2 Concerns may be raised orally or in writing. Whether a written or oral report is made it is important that relevant information is provide covering:-

- Your name and a contact point. As referred to above, it will be more difficult for the School to pursue issues if concerns have been expressed anonymously.
- the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates and names and positions of those who may be in a position to have contributed to your concern).
- the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

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

7.4 Although you will not be expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of any allegations, in order to assist management in any investigation to be carried

out, you will need to provide information to the person contacted to establish that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

- 7.5 Obtain advice/guidance on how to pursue matters of concern may from any of those mentioned at paragraph 7.1 above including your normal line manager / supervisor and or trade union representative.
- 7.6 As mentioned in 5.2 above, you may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first, or a Support Worker or trade union representative. The main issue is that you feel “comfortable” and “secure” in actually bringing forward your concern. Colleagues who have had the same experience or concerns may not only add strength to your actual concern but may also be a more acceptable way for you personally to raise the issue.
- 7.7 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.

8. HOW THE SCHOOL WILL RESPOND

- 8.1 The School will respond to your concerns. Do not forget that the testing out of your concerns is not the same as either accepting or rejecting them.
- 8.2 Where appropriate, the matters raised may:
 - be investigated by a Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
 - depending upon the nature of the concern an investigation may be carried out by the Business Manager and or Internal Audit if the concern is Finance related.
 - be referred to the police if the concern is of a criminal nature.
 - form the subject of an external investigation.
- 8.3 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 that the School 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 etc.), will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.
- 8.4 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.
- 8.5 Within ten working days of a concern being raised, a designated investigator from the School will write to you (unless you have requested not to be contacted or to be contacted in a different way other than by letter): - □ acknowledging that the concern has been received.
 - indicating how the School proposes 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 employee support mechanisms, and
 - telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

Where the concern has been made anonymously, obviously management will be unable to communicate what action has been taken.

- 8.6 The amount of contact between the investigating officer considering the issues and you will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the School will seek further information from you.
- 8.7 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.
- 8.8 The School will take steps to minimise any difficulties that 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 ensure that support mechanisms are made available where needed or desired.
- 8.9 The School 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.
- 8.10 The School will ensure that support is provided to you.

9. THE RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

- 9.1 The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. They should maintain a record of all concerns raised and the outcomes and will report as necessary to the Governing Body. The recording and reporting procedure will be in a form, which ensures your confidentiality.

10. HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

- 10.1 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:
- the external auditor.
 - your trade union.
 - your local Citizens Advice Bureau.
 - relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations.
 - a relevant voluntary organisation.
 - the police.
 - the Ombudsman.
- 10.2 If you do feel that you need to take the matter to other “monitoring organisations” outside the School (e.g. reporting an issue to the External Auditor, the Ombudsman or the Police), you may find that you will be confronted with the need to divulge what may be termed as confidential information. Although normally you would be required to ensure that you maintain total confidentiality, then subject to paragraph 6 above, and in this situation, no action will be taken against you. However, if you go externally, you may be encouraged to exhaust internal processes in the first instance.

Approved by Governing Body of Ashcroft High School:	July 2017
Policy Review date:	September 2018
Governors' Committee:	Curriculum, Students and Personnel
SLT staff responsible:	Mrs J Ellins
Statutory Policy: Yes / No	Yes