Sheepy Magna Church of England Primary School

Whistleblowing Policy

Headteacher: Alison Field

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Chair of Governors: David Wright

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Last Reviewed – November 2024

Next Review Date – November 2027

Rationale
The Local Authority and the Governing Body are committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty and accountability. In line with this commitment, the school encourages employees with serious concerns about the School's work to raise their concerns. This also applies to concerns about the activities of staff and Governors and external organisations in their dealings with the school.

This policy:
- provides the basis on which employees can raise any such concerns they may have, and receive feedback; (the feedback will include information about the outcome of the investigation but not the detail of the investigation nor the action taken).
- allows employees to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the school's response, and;
- gives protection from reprisals or victimisation for 'whistleblowing' in good faith.

Aims
There are existing procedures in place to enable employees to raise grievances about their own employment. This policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of individual grievances.

The concern may be about something that:
- is unlawful;
- is against the Local Authority's Standing Orders or School Policies;
- amounts to improper conduct;
- seems likely to cause damage or harm to a member of the public or the environment;
- 'covers up' an issue of concern.

Safeguards for staff raising concerns
Harassment or Victimisation
The Governing Body recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisals from those responsible for the malpractice. The school will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take all possible measures to protect employees who raise legitimate concerns.

Confidentiality
The school and Local Authority will protect the identity of employees who raise concerns and do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated, however, that the investigation may reveal the source of the information and statements made by the employees who raised the issue may be required as part of the evidence.

The school and Local Authority encourage employees to put their name to allegations made. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the school and Local Authority. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken account of will include:
- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources;
- untrue allegations.

If an allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. However, if employees make allegations that are malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action against them may be considered.

Raising a Concern

The sooner employees raise their concern the easier it is to take action.

As a first step, employees should normally raise concerns with their Headteacher. This will depend on the nature of their concern and on the seriousness, and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the inappropriate practice. Employees who feel that they cannot approach management in their own school should approach either:

- Chair of Governors
- School's Local Authority HR Officer
- Trade Union representative

Concerns should normally be raised in writing. This letter should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why the employee is concerned about the situation. Employees who do not feel able to put their concerns in writing can telephone or meet the appropriate officer.

Employees may invite their Trade Union to raise the matter in conjunction with them.

School/Local Authority Response

The action taken by the school and/or Local Authority will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may, for example:

- be investigated internally
- be referred to the Police
- be referred to the External Auditor, or
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

In order to protect individuals, the school and the Local Authority, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or unlawful discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

Within two weeks of a concern being received, the Chair of Governors or appropriate School or Local Authority Officer will write to the employee who raised the issue:

- acknowledging that the concern has been raised
- indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter
- where possible, giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response, and
- telling the employee whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not.

The amount of contact between the officers considering the issue and the employee, who has raised the issue, will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from the employee.