

OVERTON GRANGE SCHOOL POLICY

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Govs Comm. RESOURCES

Reason for the Policy

The term 'whistleblowing' means the confidential raising of problems or concerns within an organisation by a member of staff, parent, governor or other third party. This refers to matters of impropriety, for example a breach of law, school procedures or ethics. The term 'whistleblower' relates to the person raising the concern.

The staff and governors at Overton Grange School seek to run all aspects of the School with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity. We are committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice. Overton Grange School is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness so that a person who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise the matter with full confidence that the matter will be appropriately considered and resolved.

Recognising that some concerns may be extremely sensitive this policy will allow for the confidential raising of concerns within the school environment but which also has recourse to an external party outside of our management structure.

What is the policy going to do?

To act as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially
To provide for a thorough and appropriate investigation
To bring each matter to a satisfactory conclusion

How is the policy going to be put into practice?

This policy will apply to matters such as:

- Child protection issues including sexual, emotional or physical abuse of pupils or others
- manipulation of accounting records and finances
- inappropriate use of school assets or funds
- decision-making for personal gain;
- any criminal activity;
- abuse of position, improper conduct and behaviour which falls below established standards or practice;
- fraud and deceit or corrupt practices;
- serious breaches of school policies and procedures which may advantage a particular party (for example tampering with tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest);
- a miscarriage of justice;
- Other unethical conduct, including the circulation of inappropriate emails
- Dangerous practices, acts or omission creating risk to health and safety;

- an act or omission causing damage to the environment and property of the school or member of the school community;
- a breach of any legal obligation;
- supressing information about anything listed above.

It does not apply to matters of more general grievance which should be dealt with under the Overton Grange School grievance or complaint procedures.

Overton Grange School encourages the whistleblower to raise the matter internally in the first instance to allow those school staff and governors in positions of responsibility and authority to investigate and take appropriate action where necessary.

Concerns should be raised with the Headteacher in the first instance, or with the Chair of Governors if the concern involves the Headteacher in any way.

In exceptional circumstances where the whistleblower does not feel it is appropriate to contact either the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, advice can be sought from Protect www.protect-advice.org.uk (formerly Public concern at work) 0203 117 2520

Where possible the concern should be raised in written form and marked private and confidential, outlining the background, history, names, dates and places where possible. Matters can also be raised in person or by telephone.

Whistleblowers are encouraged to put their name to an allegation. Where confidentiality is requested, this will be respected wherever possible. Anonymous allegations will only be considered if the issues raised are very serious, the credibility of the allegation is considered to be high, or the likelihood of confirming the allegation is high.

Do's

- Make notes of your concerns with all relevant details, date, time, names, conversations
- Share your concerns with the Headteacher or Chair of Governors

Don't

- Do nothing if you feel your concerns are warranted
- Approach individuals directly
- Investigate the matter yourself
- Discuss your suspicions with anyone except those with proper authority as outlined in this policy, ie Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Investigating Officer.

Progressing a disclosure

In cases of a referral to an external body (above) the progress of the matter will be determined by that body.

In the case of a referral to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, a suitable investigating officer will be appointed and, depending on the nature of the issue a referral to the police

may be considered. The investigating officer may be a senior member of staff or someone external to the organisation appointed for the purpose.

The investigating officer will contact the whistleblower within five working days to begin their preliminary investigation. Where the whistleblower is an employee, they will be entitled to bring a work colleague or trade union representative to the meeting, as long as the third party is not involved in the issue (in other cases the right to bring a companion will be at the discretion of the investigating officer). The whistleblower will be asked to demonstrate to the investigating officer that there are sufficient grounds for concern; for example, by setting out the background and history, providing names, dates and places wherever possible, and explaining the reasons for the concerns.

The investigating officer may need to make enquiries of third parties for further information, advice or assistance. Confidential records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation.

The investigating officer will report the findings back to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors receiving the initial disclosure, who will then determine what corrective action needs to be taken. This may include some form of disciplinary action or third party referral to any appropriate regulatory agency, such as the police.

The Headteacher or Chair of Governors will notify the person who is the subject of the disclosure within five working days of the decision. Upon receipt of such information the individual will be able to appeal against any decisions by writing to the Headteacher or Governing Body.

Wherever possible and appropriate, subject to any issues of confidentiality, the whistleblower will be informed of the results of the investigation and the action taken to address the matter. Depending on the nature of the concern or allegation and whether or not it has been substantiated, the matter may be reported to the governing body.

If the whistleblower is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter, or has genuine concerns that the matter has not been handled appropriately, they can raise the concerns in writing within ten working days of the date of the school's response either with the investigating officer, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.

At which point the whistleblower will receive a response within five working days of receipt of their letter to arrange a further meeting to discuss the continuing concerns and why they are dissatisfied with the initial outcome. The Headteacher or Chair of Governors will then decide whether further investigation is needed and what action will be taken. The whistleblower will be notified of this decision within 10 working days of the meeting.

If the whistleblower remains dissatisfied with the outcome they can refer their concern to a "prescribed person or body" (for further details see www.gov.uk/whistleblowing/how-to-blow-the-whistle).

As far as possible whistleblowers, whether they are staff, parents, contractors or governors will be protected from any reprisals. Overton Grange School will not tolerate any attempt to victimise the whistleblower (or in the case of parents, their children) or to prevent concerns being raised. Employees should be confident that raising concerns in good faith and/or in the public interest will not affect their employment at the School in any way, even if the investigation finds that the concern was not justified.

Individuals are encouraged to come forward in good faith with genuine concerns in the knowledge they will be taken seriously. If individuals raise malicious, unfounded concerns or attempt to make mischief, this will also be taken seriously and may constitute a disciplinary offence

Criteria for Success

High ethical standards will be maintained.

Individuals understand how to raise a concern, under which policy, and are confident in the process.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Headteacher is responsible for monitoring the policy. It will be reviewed by the governing body at agreed intervals.

Links with Other Policies

Complaints Policy

Grievance Procedure

Child Protection Policy & Procedures (in particular the section 'Concerns about a member of staff, carer or volunteer')

Financial handbook

Anti-bribery policy

Governors code of conduct

Staff code of conduct

ICT acceptable use policy for staff

Staff Discipline (procedures for addressing)