

# CRAMLINGTON LEARNING VILLAGE



## WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

<b>Document Title</b>	<b>Whistleblowing Policy</b>
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## REVISION HISTORY

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# WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Cramlington Learning Village is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty, integrity and accountability. The school acknowledges that employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within their organisation and that the school needs to encourage employees and others with concerns to come forward and be able to voice them i.e. whistleblow.
- 1.2. The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is set out in the [Academies Financial Handbook](#). This policy has been revised in line with the above document, as well as [government guidance on whistleblowing](#). This policy also takes into account the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

The policy will be agreed with the relevant Trade Unions and will be reviewed on a three-yearly basis or when there are any legislative changes to ensure it remains up to date and effective.

## 2. Aims

- 2.1. This policy aims to:
  - Encourage employees to feel confident in raising concerns of suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible
  - Reassure employees that, when they make a disclosure they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation
  - Provide avenues for an employee to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
  - Ensure that employees get a response to the concerns they have raised from the school and, if not satisfied, explains how they may take the matter further.

## 3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, agency workers, contractors and suppliers.
- 3.2. The issue raised must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others, e.g. the general public.

## 4. Responsibilities

- 4.1. The governing body has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.

- 4.2. Ken Brechin (deputy headteacher), as whistleblowing officer, has day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy, and must ensure that all managers and other staff who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate training. The whistleblowing officer will maintain a corporate register of the number and nature of the concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Co-headteachers and/or the chair of governors where appropriate.
- 4.3. All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing.

## 5. What is whistleblowing?

- 5.1. **Whistleblowing** is the disclosure of information, which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work which is in the public interest. This may include:
- Criminal activity;
  - Failure to comply with any legal [or professional] obligation [or regulatory requirements];
  - Miscarriages of justice;
  - Danger to health and safety;
  - Damage to the environment;
  - Bribery
  - Financial fraud or mismanagement;
  - Negligence;
  - Breach of our internal policies and procedures [including the school's Code of Conduct];
  - Conduct likely to damage the school's reputation;
  - Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
  - Action which falls below the school's standards of practice
  - Abuse (e.g. physical, sexual)
  - Discrimination to any worker or service recipient e.g. disability, race etc.
  - The deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.
- 5.2. A **whistleblower** is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the school's activities and you believe it to be in the public interest (a **whistleblowing concern**) you should report it under this policy.
- 5.3. This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. For such instances you should use the Grievance Procedure or Harassment Policy and/or Dignity at Work Policy as appropriate.
- 5.4. Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a supplier or service provider.

## 6. Protection and support for whistleblowers

- 6.1. It is understandable that the whistleblower may be worried about possible repercussions. The school aims to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken. The school

recognises that the decision to make a disclosure can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice or from other employees. The school will not tolerate bullying, harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern using this policy.

- 6.2. Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal (including selection for redundancy), disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. Employees who make a disclosure that is deemed to be in the public interest are protected from suffering a detriment in their employment under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA).

## **7. Confidentiality**

- 7.1. The school will do its best to protect your identity when you raise a concern and do not want your name to be disclosed. If you ask us to protect your identity by keeping your confidence, we will not disclose it without your consent or unless instructed by a tribunal or court. If the situation arises where we are not able to resolve the concern without revealing your identity (e.g. a statement by you may be required as part of the evidence) we will discuss with you whether and how we can proceed.

## **8. Anonymous Allegations**

- 8.1. This policy strongly encourages you to put your name to your allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously will be much more difficult for the school to look into or to protect your position or to give you feedback. Concerns raised anonymously are much less powerful and less likely to be effective, but they will be considered at the discretion of the school.
- 8.2. In exercising discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:
- The seriousness of the issues raised
  - The credibility and plausibility of the concern; and
  - The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

## **9. Untrue or Malicious Allegations**

- 9.1. If you make an allegation that you reasonably believe is true but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make malicious or vexatious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

## **10. Procedure for staff to raise a whistleblowing concern**

Staff should consider the examples in section 5.1 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistleblowing nature. Staff should consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or school procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

- 10.1. Staff should report their concerns to the whistleblowing officer. If the concern is about either or both of the Co-Headteachers, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the chair of the governing body. In this instance the governing body will then respond in accordance with the procedures set out below in section 11.
- 10.2. Concerns can be raised verbally but are better raised in writing. You are invited to set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation. If you do not feel able to put your concern in writing, you can telephone or meet the appropriate person.
- 10.3. The earlier you express the concern, the easier it is to take action. Although you are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for your concern.
- 10.4. You may also invite your Trade Union or professional association to raise a matter on your behalf.

## **11. How the school will respond**

- 11.1. When a concern is received by the whistleblowing officer they will meet with the person raising the concern at the earliest opportunity to get as much detail about the concern and to record the information. If it becomes apparent the concern is not of a whistleblowing nature, the whistleblowing officer will handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy and procedure.
- 11.2. It will be reiterated at the meeting, that the staff member raising the concern is protected from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern.
- 11.3. The action taken by the school will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:
  - Be investigated internally
  - Be referred to the Police.
- 11.4. In order to protect individuals and the school, 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) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.
- 11.5. The school will normally write to you in confidence, within ten working days of a concern being received:
  - Acknowledging that the concern has been received;
  - Indicating, in overall terms, how it proposes to deal with the matter;
  - Giving, where possible, an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
  - Telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made; and
  - Telling you whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.
- 11.6. The amount of contact between those 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, further information will be sought from you.

- 11.7. When any meeting is arranged, you may wish to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative, a work colleague, or a friend who does not have a conflict of interest.
- 11.8. The School recognises that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed and as such, where possible, the School will provide information in this regard.

## 12. Independent Advice

- 12.1. If you are unsure whether to use this policy, please speak to the whistleblowing officer. Alternatively, you may want to seek independent advice by contacting:
- Your Trade Union;
  - Your professional body
  - The whistleblowing charity, 'Protect' (formerly Public Concern at Work) has a free and confidential [advice line](#) and can provide [further guidance](#) on the difference between a whistleblowing concern and a grievance.
  - The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and Citizens Advice (reference made on [gov.uk](#) site)

## 13. External Disclosures

- 13.1. This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue to raise concerns within the school and to give you the reassurance you need to raise such matters internally. The school hopes you will be satisfied. If you are not, and if you feel it is right to take the matter outside the school you should contact a prescribed person or body (guidance is available from **GOV.UK - Blowing the whistle: list of prescribed people and bodies**). This includes a list of public bodies, which can deal with particular areas of concern e.g. Education, Finance etc. You can also make a disclosure to a solicitor or the police.
- 13.2. You should tell the prescribed person or body if you think that the **school**:
- Will cover the issue up;
  - Treat you unfairly if you complained;
  - Hasn't sorted the issue out and you've already reported it.