

COPPICE
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Whistleblowing Policy

Date	Review Date	Endorsed by	Approved by	Link Governor
April 2026	April 2027	FGB	Governing Body	Tosin Asaolu

Aspire, Believe, Achieve & Thrive











Policy written by: LBR

Whistle Blowing Policy

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School Coppice Primary School
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Signature of Chair of Governors .....
Signature of Executive Head Teacher .....
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1. Introduction

1.1 The Governing Body is committed to high standards in all aspects of the School and will treat whistleblowing as a serious matter. In line with the Governing Body's commitment to openness, probity and accountability, members of staff are encouraged to report concerns which will be taken seriously, investigated and appropriate action taken in response.

1.2 Whistleblowing is the term used when someone who works in or for an organisation wishes to raise concerns about malpractice, wrongdoing, illegality or risk in the organisation (for example, crimes, civil offences, miscarriages of justice, dangers to health and safety), and/or the cover up of any of these. The malpractice has a public interest aspect to it, usually because it threatens others. It applies to raising a concern within the organisation as well as externally, such as to a regulator.

1.3 This policy has been written in accordance with the Statutory Guidance 'Keeping Children safe in Education' 2022

All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school's or college's safeguarding regime and know that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team.

Appropriate whistleblowing procedures, should be put in place for such concerns to be raised with the school's or college's senior leadership team.

Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their employer, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels may be open to them:

2. Aim and Scope of the Policy

2.1 This Policy aims to:

- Give confidence to members of staff about raising concerns about conduct or practice which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical or which amounts to malpractice or is inconsistent with school standards and policies so that s/he is encouraged to act on those concerns
- Provide clear channels for raising concerns
- Ensure that members of staff receive a response to the concerns they have raised and feedback on any action taken

- Offer assurance that members of staff are protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing action undertaken in good faith and within the meaning of the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998 (see section 4 below)

2.2 The Policy applies to all:

- Staff (including trainees and apprentices)
- Workers (not directly employed by the School) i.e. supply, agency and casual workers
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Suppliers
- Organisations working in partnership with the School

2.3 Concerns which would be appropriate to report include the following issues, where they affect or are relevant to the School:

- Safeguarding of children
- Health and safety risks, either to pupils, visitors, the public or other members of staff;
- Concerns over the prevention of people being drawn into terrorism (as defined in the Government's PREVENT Guidance0
- Any unlawful act (e.g. theft);
- The unauthorised use of school funds (e.g. expenditure for improper purpose);
- A breach of the School Code of Conduct;
- Maladministration (e.g. not adhering to procedures, negligence);
- Failing to safeguard personal and/or sensitive information (data protection);
- Damage to the environment (e.g. pollution);
- Fraud and corruption (e.g. to give or receive any gift/reward as a bribe);
- Abuse of power;
- Poor value for money;
- Other unethical conduct; and
- Any deliberate concealment of information tending to show any of the above.

3. Issues not covered by the policy

3.1 Issues and complaints from members of staff in respect of their employment which are not in the public interest do not fall within the scope of this policy. They are covered by alternative School policies and procedures, e.g. grievance, pay policy.These should be raised with the Executive Head Teacher/relevant designated manager in the first instance.

4. Protecting the Whistleblower

4.1 The Policy has been written in line with the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998, which protects whistleblowers from reprisals as long as the worker makes a qualifying disclosure. This is any disclosure of information that, in the reasonable belief of the worker making the disclosure, is made in the public interest and tends to show one or more of the following:

- That a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed
- That a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which she or he is subject
- That a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur
- That the health and safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered
- That the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged f) that information tending to show any matter falling within any of the preceding paragraphs has been or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

The main features protecting the whistle blower are as follows:

- Workers have the right not to be victimised or dismissed as a result of a disclosure which is protected by the Act;
- Protection provided by the Act is not subject to any qualifying period of employment;
- Where a whistleblower is victimised as a result of their whistleblow, they can bring a claim at an employment tribunal for compensation. Awards are based on losses suffered and are unlimited;
- A disclosure will not qualify for protection unless it is made in the public interest and tend to show one or more number of issues listed above;
- The term “workers” relates to staff including trainees and apprentices. This also extends to those not directly employed by the School (i.e. contractors, agency workers, casual workers, and volunteers.

4.2 The Governing Body will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of whistle blowers when matters are raised in accordance with the PIDA provisions. Any member of staff who victimises or harasses a member of staff as a result of their having raised a concern in accordance with the whistleblowing policy will be dealt with under the School’s Disciplinary procedure.

4.3 If however, individuals raise malicious unfounded concerns, attempt to make mischief or personal gain, this will also be taken seriously and may lead to disciplinary action in accordance with the School’s Disciplinary Procedure.

5. Anonymity and Confidentiality

5.1 All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the whistleblower if they so wish, unless a disclosure is required by law.

5.2 The best way to raise a concern is to do so openly. Individuals are encouraged to provide their details when raising a concern. Openness makes it easier for the School to investigate the matter and obtain further information.

5.3 Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but they may be considered at the discretion of the Executive Head Teacher. In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:

- The seriousness of the issue raised
- The credibility of the concern; and
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources

6. Allegations Concerning Child Protection Issues

6.1 All staff members are made aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the management of child protection, which may include the attitude or actions of colleagues. If necessary, they will speak with the Executive Executive Head Teacher, the Chair of governors, the designated governor for safeguarding and child protection or with the Local Authority Designated Officer - see paragraph 7.4 below.

6.2 It is open to the member of staff to make a direct referral to the Social Services designated manager either before raising their concern with the Governing Body or where the Executive Head Teacher or Chair of Governors fails to do so after raising their concern and the member of staff remains concerned about the situation.

7. How to raise an issue

7.1 Staff members (and others covered by this policy - see section 2.2 above) should report their concerns, in writing, to the Executive Head Teacher in the first instance. Note: if the concerns involve the Executive Head Teacher themselves then the Chair of Governors should be the first point of contact.

7.2 It is expected that the Executive Head Teacher will investigate the allegation. However it is at the discretion of the Executive Head Teacher to delegate the investigation to another person if they feel this is appropriate.

7.3 The School would prefer that a serious concern is raised responsibly rather than not at all. If someone does not feel comfortable raising the issue within the School the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) allows disclosures to relevant

"prescribed bodies". See the list of prescribed persons and organisations via the link below:

Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies - Publications - GOV.UK

However it would usually be expected that the member of staff reports their concerns initially to the Executive Head Teacher.

7.4 Where the concern relates to a child protection matter, if the staff member feels unable to raise this through the school, they must consult the Corporate Director of People or in his/her absence the Operational Director, Children and Families. If the concern needs to have Police or other statutory authority involvement, the whistleblowing process will be halted until the statutory authorities have completed their investigations and confirmed that it is appropriate to continue with the whistleblowing process.

7.5 The employee/worker may also directly approach one of the following senior officers (depending on the seriousness of the alleged malpractice and the seniority of any officers who may be involved).

Chief Executive	82100
Corporate Director of Resources	83588
S151 Officer	83013
Head of Legal & Constitutional Services (Monitoring Officer)	82201
Head of Audit	83130

7.6 Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. , Contact can be made in confidence on 0800 633 5267 or e-mail whistleblow@redbridge.gov.uk

7.7 If a member of staff feels unable to raise an issue with the Executive Head Teacher, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, there are other whistleblowing channels:

- General guidance can be found at: Advice on whistleblowing
- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally or have concerns about the way a concern is being handled by school. Staff can call 0800 028 0285, the line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: help@nspcc.org.uk
- Redbridge Children's Services Social Care: in office hours 020 8708 3888; out of hours 020 8708 5897; or email CPAT.Referrals@redbridge.gov.uk

8. What the School will do

8.1 Once a concern is raised, initial enquiries will be made to determine whether an investigation is needed and what form it should take. If it is determined that the matter is **not** in the public interest then the concerns or allegations will be dealt with under the appropriate internal School procedure (e.g. grievance, disciplinary). This will protect the individuals involved from potential public disclosure, where this is not warranted. Where a concern involves the Executive Head Teacher, please see para 7.1

8.2 In some cases, the whistleblower may be asked to provide evidence as a witness. If a whistleblower declines to be a witness, it may not be possible to pursue an investigation if it is not possible to gain sufficient evidence from other sources.

8.3 All whistle blows will be reported to the School's Governing Body, so that they are recorded on a central record.

8.4 Any action taken by the School will depend upon the nature of the concern raised.It may:

- Be investigated internally by the Executive Head Teacher, other designated managers, managers, (and where applicable, a Human Resources Employment Relations Advisor)
- Be investigated by the Council's internal auditor
- Be referred to the LADO (in the case of child protection)
- Be referred to the police
- Form the subject of an independent enquiry.

It may be possible to resolve some concerns by agreed action without the need to carry out an investigation. If urgent action is required this will take place before any investigation is conducted.

Concerns of a potentially criminal or unlawful nature will be dealt with in line with the Council's Crime Response Plan. Other matters will be considered individually and investigated appropriately.

8.5 If the whistleblower provides contact details, they will receive an acknowledgement within 10 school days and an outcome letter/email to state one of three outcomes:

- Action to be taken and/or monitoring (without specifying details, for reasons of confidentiality)
- Not able to pursue (e.g. insufficient evidence/information)
- No further action required

8.6 The whistleblower should report to the Executive Head Teacher/other designated manager if they believe that they are suffering a detriment for having raised a concern.

8.7 The outcome of each case will be dealt with depending on the findings of the investigation:

- **Prosecution / disciplinary action** – Prosecution may be sought where appropriate. In cases of fraud and/or corruption, action should be taken in line with the Council's Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy, which has been approved by Cabinet and which states "we will take the strongest possible action against offenders in deterring against any fraudulent activity within the organisation and services provided to the public, and to this end we will seek prosecution wherever appropriate";

- **Management action / monitoring** – where there is no evidence of any wrongdoing, but weaknesses or loopholes have been identified. In these cases the Executive Head Teacher should make improvements to ensure that further instances do not occur;

- **Not possible to pursue** – these cases usually occur where there is inadequate evidence or as a result of inadequate information from the Whistleblower, possibly where the individual wishes to remain anonymous and it is not possible to discuss the matter further to gather more facts; and

- **No further action required** – the investigation provides sufficient evidence to show that the concern or allegation is unfounded.

8.8 The Executive Head Teacher/designated manager investigating the matter will need to maintain adequate and appropriate contact with the whistleblower. It is likely that the whistleblower will be interviewed to ensure that the disclosure is fully understood.

8.9 Where any meeting is arranged, the whistleblower has the right to beaccompanied by a Trade Union or Professional Association Representative or a current employee of the School who is completely independent of the allegation.

8.10 The School will do what it can to minimise any difficulties the whistleblower may have as a result of raising a concern. For instance, HR can provide guidance for whistleblowers when giving evidence in criminal proceedings. Guidance and support is also available from the whistleblower's Trade Union.

8.11 The whistleblower needs to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, information about the outcomes of any investigations will be provided at an appropriate time.

9. How matters can be taken further

9.1 If the whistleblower is not satisfied with the outcome of an investigation, they should contact the School's Chair of Governors, explaining why this is the case. The matter may be investigated further if the whistleblower can identify evidence that was not previously available or was overlooked at the time. However, the Chair of Governors decision will be final.

9.2 If still dissatisfied the whistleblower may contact the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), the whistleblowing charity Public Concern at Work or their trade union for more guidance.

10. Recording and monitoring

10.1 All outcomes from investigations will be maintained on a central record in order for the School to identify potentially serious problems and trends, which need to be addressed. Data relating to the performance of the Policy may be provided to the appropriate external auditors. Information relating to the initial report and subsequent investigation is always treated in strictest confidence.

11. Summary

11.1 **Whistleblowers should:**

- Make an immediate note of their concerns
- Note all relevant details, such as what was said in telephone or other conversations, the date, time and the names of parties involved.
- Note any documentary evidence that may exist to support their concerns but do not interfere with this evidence.
- Report concerns to the Executive Head Teacher/designated manager
- Deal with the matter quickly. Any delay could allow the problem to continue and escalate and for evidence to disappear
- Think about risks and outcomes before taking action
- Follow the guidance provided and contact the appropriate officer

Whistleblowers should not:

- Do nothing and let their concerns go unreported
- Be afraid of raising concerns
- Approach and accuse individuals directly
- Try and investigate the matter themselves
- Convey their suspicions to anyone except those of the proper authority as set out in the School's policy.
- Use the whistleblowing procedure to pursue a personal grievance