

Sonning Common
Primary School

**WHISTLEBLOWING
POLICY**

POLICY No. 71 Version 1
Spring 2008

Whistleblowing Policy

Whistleblowing Policy : Raising Concerns At Work

“Whistleblowing” is defined as “raising concerns about misconduct within an organisation” (Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life).

All employees of Sonning Common Primary School are encouraged to report any serious concerns about any aspect of the school or the conduct of its employees or of others acting on behalf of the school. Where the concern relates to an individual’s own employment the school’s Grievance Policy should be used. The procedures contained in this Whistleblowing Policy should be followed if the concern relates to something which:

- is against the school’s policies
- falls below established standards of practice ; or
- amounts to improper conduct, including something you believe to be:
 - against the law;
 - a Health and Safety risk;
 - damaging the environment;
 - misuse of public money;
 - corruption or unethical conduct;
 - abuse of pupils;
 - concealment of any of the above.

Support for employees

The governing body is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, integrity and accountability. It encourages employees with serious concerns about any aspect of the school’s work to come forward and express those concerns. Once a concern is raised, the governing body is responsible for ensuring that appropriate personal support is given both to the employee raising the concern and to any employee against whom allegations have been made under this procedure. They are responsible for ensuring that both parties are kept informed of progress.

If an employee raises a concern in good faith but it is not subsequently confirmed by investigation, no action will be taken against them. If however, a concern is raised frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, the employee may face disciplinary action.

Confidentiality

All concerns are treated sensitively and with due regard to confidentiality. Every effort is made to protect the identity of the person raising the concern if they so wish; however, the information will be passed to those with a legitimate need to have it, and it may be necessary for the individual to provide a written statement or act as a witness in any subsequent enquiry. This is always discussed with the individual first.

Concerns expressed anonymously are always investigated unless the chair of governors and the Director for Children, Young People & Families agree that there is insufficient evidence to proceed. Where the governing body is involved in the

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complaint, the Director for Children, Young People & Families will make the decision. An investigation may be carried out depending on the nature of the allegation and the evidence / information presented.

Raising a concern

The procedure detailed below should be followed by employees wishing to raise a concern .

Step 1

The team leader or usual manager is made aware of the concern by the employee. This can be in person or in writing. Employees may find it useful to refer to other relevant policies which set out the standards expected of employees at our school. In circumstances where it is inappropriate to approach the team leader or manager, the following people may be approached, depending on the nature of the concern:

- Head teacher
- Deputy head teacher
- Chair of Personnel Committee
- Chair of governors
- Local Authority adviser

Employees may obtain assistance in putting forward a concern from the Children, Young People & Families Directorate HR Team or a Trade Union representative or colleague. Employees may choose to be represented by a Trade Union representative or colleague at any meetings which are required.

Step 2

The manager with whom the concern has been registered acknowledges receipt as soon as possible and writes to the employee within 10 working days with the following:

1. an indication of how the concern will be dealt with;
2. an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
3. whether any initial enquiries have been made;
4. whether further investigations will take place, and if not why not;
5. information on employee support services.

Advice for those investigating concerns is available on the Oxfordshire County Council's intranet.

Step 3

Initial enquiries will be made to decide if an investigation is appropriate in each case. Where an investigation is necessary it may take the form of one or more of the following:

- an internal investigation by management leading to a form of disciplinary investigation
- a referral to the police
- a referral to the District Auditor
- the setting up of an external independent enquiry

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Step 4

The governing body informs the employee in writing of the outcome of any investigation or action taken, subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the law.

Where an employee feels that their concern has not been addressed adequately, they may subsequently raise it with an independent body such as :

- the District Auditor;
- the relevant Trade Union;
- a local Citizens Advice Bureau;
- a relevant professional body
- the Police;
- the local Government Ombudsman;
- the Equal Opportunities Commission;
- The Commission for Racial Equality;
- The Disability Rights Commission.

All disclosures must be made in good faith. Employees must not do so for personal gain and they must reasonably believe the information disclosed and any allegation in it to be substantially true and that in all the circumstances it is reasonable for them to make the disclosure.

Employees may disclose their concern to someone other than those listed above if all of the following criteria apply:

- the issue is of an exceptionally serious nature and
- is believed to be substantially true and
- the disclosure is not made for personal gain and
- in all the circumstances it is reasonable to make the disclosure.

The identity of the person/organisation to whom the disclosure is made will be considered when determining whether the disclosure is reasonable or not.

Employees of Sonning Common Primary School have a duty to the school not to disclose confidential information. This does not prevent an employee from seeking independent advice at any stage nor from discussing the issue with the charity Public Concern at Work – www.pcaw.demon.co.uk in accordance with the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

