

Date: June 2018

Next review due: June 2020

Responsibility: SMT (JRH/HR Manager)



POLICY ON WHISTLEBLOWING

The Schools have a culture of valuing staff and encouraging them to engage in reflective practice. They have adopted this policy and the accompanying procedure on whistleblowing to enable members of staff to raise any concerns regarding suspected wrongdoing or dangers including safeguarding, fraud, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, and failure to comply with legal obligations, inappropriate behaviour or unethical conduct. The policy also provides if necessary, for such concerns to be raised outside the Schools.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

Elements of the policy

The Schools will:

- not tolerate malpractice;
- respect the confidentiality of staff raising concerns and will, where possible, maintain confidentiality so far as is consistent with progressing the issues effectively
- not tolerate the victimisation or harassment of any member of staff raising a concern;
- provide the opportunity to raise concerns outside of the normal line management structure where this is appropriate;
- invoke the Schools' disciplinary policy and procedure in the case of false, malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations though no member of the staff will suffer a detriment or be disciplined for raising a genuine and legitimate concern, providing that they do so in good faith and following the Schools' policies;
- provide a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns, which is accessible to all members of staff.

This procedure is separate from the Schools' adopted procedures regarding grievances. Staff should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise grievances about their personal employment situation.

The purpose of this procedure is to enable members of staff to express any concerns they may have regarding suspected malpractice within the Schools.

Malpractice is not easily defined; however, it includes allegations of fraud, financial irregularities, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, criminal activities, or failing to comply with a legal or regulatory obligation, a miscarriage of justice, conduct likely to damage our reputation or financial wellbeing, negligence, creating or ignoring a serious risk to health, safety or the environment and the concealment of information relating to any of the above.

We hope that in many cases members of staff will be able to raise any concerns with their line manager. Staff may put their concern in writing or tell their manager in person. The manager may be able to agree a way of resolving the concern quickly and effectively. In some cases, the manager may refer the matter to another more appropriate person.

However, where the matter is more serious, or the staff member feels that their line manager has not addressed the concern, or they prefer not to raise it with the manager for any reason, they should follow the procedure below.

How to raise a concern.

Where a member of staff has a concern, they may write directly to one of the named investigators: the Principal or Vice Principals (in the case of teaching staff) or the Bursar (in the case of support staff). Where concerns relate to the Bursar or Vice Principals, staff should contact the Principal directly: where concerns relate to the Principal, staff should contact the Chairman of Governors via the HR Manager

The member of staff should provide as much detail as possible and any supporting evidence they have. If there is evidence of criminal activity then the Police will in all cases be informed.

Members of staff are encouraged to put their names to any disclosures of information. If a concern is raised anonymously, it will be much more difficult for the Schools to look into the matter, to protect the whistleblower's position or to give them feedback. If a situation arises where the Schools are not able to resolve a concern without revealing the whistleblower's identity, the investigator will discuss whether and how to proceed with the whistleblower. We will make every effort to keep your identity secret.

What the Schools will do.

Upon receipt of a disclosure of information, the investigator will normally write to the member of staff who reported the concern within five working days, to acknowledge receipt of the disclosure and to arrange a meeting to discuss it (or to explain the reasons for any delay in arranging a meeting to discuss the disclosure). The meeting will take place within a reasonable timescale, and reasonable notice will be given. At the meeting, the whistleblower may be accompanied by a colleague or trade union official. The member of staff may request postponement of the meeting if his/her chosen companion is not available. In such cases the meeting will be postponed by up to five working days.

The investigator may arrange for another member of staff to accompany him/her to the meeting to take minutes. Other members of staff may be required to attend a meeting at the discretion of the investigator to answer questions regarding the disclosure.

The investigator will conduct any relevant investigations prior to, or subsequent to, the meeting as appropriate. Any investigation will be completed in as short a time as possible, consistent with the need for it to be full and thorough.

We will aim to keep the member of staff informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent the Schools giving them specific details for the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. The staff member should treat any information about the investigation as confidential. If the Schools conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action.

Whilst the Schools cannot always guarantee the outcome a whistleblower is seeking, we will try to deal with the concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy staff can help us to achieve this.

Protection and support for whistleblowers

It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern.

If a member of staff believes they have suffered any such treatment, they should inform [HR] immediately. If the matter is not remedied they should raise it informally using the Schools' grievance procedure.

Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If an employee is involved in such conduct they may be subject to disciplinary action.

The staff member raising a concern will be offered support, mentoring and / or counselling during the whistleblowing process.

External Disclosure.

Where all internal procedures have been exhausted, a member of staff shall have a right to access to the Schools' external auditor, UNW LLP, Citygate, St James Boulevard, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4JE, on a confidential basis.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for staff to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. We strongly encourage staff to seek advice

