iCollege

Alternative Education West Berkshire

Whistleblowing Policy

Document Control

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Written by:	WBC- model policy- adapted by iCollege DSL
Associated policies and useful information	Acronyms: MC - Management Committee LA - Local Authority WBC - West Berkshire Council CoHT – Co Headteacher SLT - Senior Leadership Team ACAS - Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service See item 7
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1: Key contact list for Whistleblowing Policy

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Chair of Governors	Tim Pritchard		tpritchard@icollege.org.uk
Whistleblowing adviceline	**NSPCC**		**0808 800 5000**

1. Purpose

1.1. It is important to the school that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by employees, workers, governors or volunteers of the school, is reported and properly dealt with.

1.2. The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) enables individuals to raise concerns where they have a reasonable belief that:

- A criminal offence;
- A miscarriage of justice;
- An act creating a risk to health and safety;
- A breach of other legal obligation;
- Damage to the environment;
- Concealment of any of the above;
- Sexual harassment;

is being, has been or is likely to be committed, and it is in the public interest to disclose it, without fear of dismissal, victimisation or detriment.

1.3. This policy and procedure sets out how such concerns should be raised and handled within the school. This policy and procedure has been developed for use in West Berkshire schools. It is recommended that schools adopt this policy and procedure.

1.4. PIDA protects employees who make a whistleblowing disclosure from harassment or victimisation as long as when making a disclosure they believe they are acting in the public interest. If the matter only affects the individual, then it is not a disclosure covered by PIDA. However, it is likely to be covered by one of the other School policies listed below:-

- Individual employee's work-related issues – Grievance Procedure;
- Concerns about school service provision – Complaints Policy and Procedure;
- Concerns regarding safety of children – Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

1.5. Whistleblowing usually refers to issues being raised internally by members of staff who have become aware of a potential wrongdoing. There may however, be occasions where a member of the public has a concern about a possible wrongdoing involving a school employee/contractor/volunteer and wishes to report it.

1.6. Members of the public can contact the school using this Policy to report any serious concerns or disclosures over wrongdoing.

1.7. Where this policy refers to a "whistleblower", it refers to both internal and external disclosures. Unlike disclosures made by employees, PIDA does not provide legal protection for disclosures made by members of the public. However, the school will take reasonable and appropriate action to protect the anonymity of members of the public when they make a disclosure.

2. Applicability

2.1. This Policy applies to:

2.1.1. All employees working for the school,
2.1.2. Other persons including governors, consultants, agency staff, volunteers and contractors working for the school, external organisations working with or providing services on behalf of the school
2.1.3. For the purposes of this policy and procedure those specified in 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 will be referred to collectively as 'workers'.

2.2. This Policy and Procedure is concerned with disclosures about matters other than a breach of an employee's own contract of employment. **If an employee is concerned that his/her own contract has been, or is likely to be, broken he/she should use the school's grievance procedure.**

2.3. The Policy and Procedure is in addition to the school's Complaints Policy.

2.4. It is the responsibility of each employee and other person mentioned in section 2.1 to familiarise themselves with and adhere to this Policy.

3. Policy

3.1. The school is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability.

3.2. The school encourages all those listed in section 2 above to be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrong-doing at work, and to raise serious concerns using the procedure below.

3.3. The school will ensure these concerns are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially, and that appropriate remedial action is taken.

3.4. The school will protect workers who raise concerns, based on a reasonable belief, under this procedure from dismissal, victimisation or detriment because they have made a disclosure.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. The overall responsibility and ownership of this policy and procedure within the school rests with the Management Committee

4.2. The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy and procedure

4.3. It is the responsibility of each worker to familiarise themselves with and adhere to this Policy. It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure that volunteers/ agency workers/ contractors and partner organisations are made aware of the existence of this policy and procedure (as part of inductions/contract terms and conditions etc)

Procedure

5. How to raise a concern

5.1. Workers are encouraged to raise concerns early to enable appropriate remedial action to be carried out.

5.2. Workers should report concerns to their line manager, or where they are concerned that their manager is involved in the wrong doing, to the Head Teacher, or via the whistleblowing helpline as specified in section 5 below.

5.3. Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. It is helpful to the investigation if the worker provides the following information:

5.3.1. The background history of the concern (giving relevant names and dates)

5.3.2. The reason the worker is particularly concerned about the situation.

A form is provided in appendix 1 that workers can use to raise their concerns.

5.4. Workers are encouraged to put their name to their allegation as anonymous allegations are harder to investigate. Where a worker asks to remain anonymous, the school will respect his/her request, but cannot guarantee that it will be able to do so.

5.5. Where allegations are raised anonymously, they will be considered at the discretion of the Head Teacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors.

5.6. Where an anonymous concern is received by email, contact will be made via this route, requesting whether the person is willing to provide further details of their concerns/whether they are willing to engage in an investigation process. The email from the school will make it clear that it may be very difficult/may not be possible to investigate an issue, if the person has given very limited information and is not willing to provide anything further.

5.7. Where a person asks to remain anonymous, the school will aim to respect this request, but cannot guarantee that it will be able to do so once an investigation is instigated, especially if the issue needs to be reported externally, for example to the police. Also, reporting issues externally for investigation could result in a whistleblower being enforced to participate in an investigation/provide the required information.

5.8. Where the Head Teacher is the subject of the allegation, the allegation will be considered by the Chair of Governors. Where the Chair of Governors is implicated in the allegation, the allegation will be considered by the Service Director for Education and SEND.

6. Whistleblowing help line

6.1. Where the worker has concerns but is unsure whether to raise them or where he/she believes that the Head Teacher is involved in the wrong doing, or remains unsatisfied that a concern that he/she has raised with his/her line manager or Head Teacher has been handled satisfactorily, he/she should seek advice from the Chair of Governors.

6.2. Workers may contact the Chair of Governors by email or in writing (see key contacts above).

6.3. The Chair of Governors will decide how the concern should be dealt with, seeking advice from those listed at 6.3 as relevant, and will pass the case to an appropriate member of the school's management team to be handled.

7. Handling concerns

7.1. The manager receiving the concern will hold an initial meeting with the worker as soon as possible to acknowledge the concern has been raised and clarify the details.

7.2. Where the matter can be resolved simply, for example where there has been a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of an event, the manager will explain this to the employee, check that the worker is satisfied that the matter is resolved and keep a record of the decision.

7.3. Where the manager decides the matter should be taken further, he/she should seek advice from one or more of the people listed below on how to proceed with the concern:

- The Head Teacher
- The Chair of Governors
- Service Director – Education and SEND
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

This/these person/people will be referred to as the 'advising manager(s)'.

7.4. No-one implicated in the allegations will be involved in conducting the investigation.

7.5. If urgent action is required this will be taken before an investigation is conducted.

7.6. Within ten working days of the concern being raised, the recipient of the concern will contact the worker to:

- Indicate how it is proposed to deal with the matter
- Give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Tell the worker whether any initial enquiries have been made
- Provide information on staff support mechanisms
- Inform the worker whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not

7.7. Concerns that fall within the scope of school procedures (e.g. child protection issues, disciplinary issues) will normally be considered under those procedures.

7.8. Where it is not clear that the concern falls under the scope of a school procedure, the manager will investigate the concern and present his/her findings to the advising manager(s). The advising manager(s) will decide upon an appropriate course of action.

7.9. The advising manager(s) will delegate responsibility for ensuring that any remedial action required is carried out to the appropriate person(people) within the school or local authority.

7.10. The advising manager(s) will also advise whether matters should also be:

- referred to the police
- referred to the internal auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry
- referred to a regulatory agency
- referred to a government department

7.11. The advising manager(s) will inform the manager that received the concern of the outcome.

7.12. Managers receiving concerns should notify the Chair of Governors of all concerns raised and the outcome once resolved so that they can be recorded (in a form that will not endanger confidentiality) for reporting purposes.

7.13. Subject to legal constraints, the worker will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and any action that will be taken as a result.

8. Safeguards against dismissal, victimisation or detriment

8.11. A worker who makes a protected disclosure has the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment, or victimised because he/she has made a disclosure.

8.12. The school will keep the matter confidential as far as possible. Where an investigation confirms the allegations workers may be required to attend hearings as witnesses.

8.13. Anyone (including managers, governors and co-workers) found to subject a worker who has made a protected disclosure to inappropriate action under a formal procedure, bullying, harassment, victimisation or detriment may be subject to disciplinary or other appropriate action.

8.14. An instruction to cover up wrong doing is a disciplinary offence. Workers should report circumstances in which they are told not to raise or pursue any concern, even where they are told not to by a person in authority such as a manager.

9. Malicious allegations

9.11. It is not necessary for a worker to have proof that wrong doing is being, has been, or is likely to be committed; a reasonable belief is sufficient.

9.12. Information given should be true to the best of the worker's knowledge, information and belief. Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence and will be handled under the school's disciplinary procedure.

10. Taking the matter further

10.11. Where the worker is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken he/she should contact the Chair of Governors (see section 5 and key contacts above). The Chair of Governors will consider what, if any, further action is required, seeking advice from those listed in 6.2 as appropriate. The Chair of Governors will inform the worker of how the matter will be taken forward.

10.12. If worker is still not satisfied he/she should report the matter to the proper authority. The legislation sets out a number of bodies to which qualifying disclosures may be made. These include:

- Local Authority
- HM Revenues and Customs
- The Financial Services Authority

- The Office of Fair Trading
- The Health and Safety Executive
- The Environment Agency
- The Director of Public Prosecutions
- The Serious Fraud Office

11. Roles and Responsibilities

11.11. The overall responsibility for this policy and procedure within the schools rests with the Head Teacher (Co Headteachers) and Chair of Governors.

11.12. The Management Committee has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy and procedure.

11.13. The Chair of Governors will keep a record of concerns raised and outcomes (in a form that does not endanger confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Council.

11.14. Managers receiving concerns are responsible for reporting the concern and the outcome to the Chair of Governors so that it can be recorded.

11.15. All managers are directly responsible for making their staff aware of this policy and procedure and for the adherence of their staff.

11.16. Workers have an individual responsibility to adhere to this policy and procedure.

12. Failure to comply with WBC Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

12.11. Workers are expected to report concerns. For some categories of employees failing to report a concern may be failing in their professional duty; this may result in disciplinary action being taken.

13. Review

13.11. This policy and procedure will be reviewed to respond to any changes and at least every 3 years.

Guidance

Guidance for workers

14. What type of concerns are covered by this policy and procedure?

14.11. As a worker you may be the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the school. It may be tempting to do nothing as you may feel that voicing your concerns would appear disloyal to colleagues or the school. You may also be afraid that it may lead to repercussions against yourself. However, it is important that you raise your concerns promptly so that the school can take action to rectify them.

14.12. The school is committed to ensuring that any wrong-doing is rectified as soon as possible and that workers are supported in raising any serious concerns. The whistleblowing policy and procedure explains how you should raise your concerns, and the protection you are entitled to.

14.13. You should report any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of the school, provision of education and extra-curricular activities or the conduct of employees, governors, volunteers or others acting on behalf of the school.

14.14. Concerns covered by the Public Interest Disclosure Act are listed in 1.2 above and may be something that makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of something that:

- Is against the law
- Puts someone at risk
- Breaches the school's standards, policies or procedures
- Is against the school's instruments and articles of government, Financial Regulations or policies and procedures
- Falls below established standards of practice
- Amounts to improper conduct

15. How are you protected when raising a concern?

15.11. The school will not dismiss you because you have raised a concern under this procedure, and will protect you against victimisation or other detriment, so long as you have a reasonable belief that the wrong-doing is being, has been, or is likely to be committed, and it is in the public interest to disclose it. The information that you give should be true to the best of your knowledge, information and belief.

15.12. You are not expected to investigate the concern yourself, just to be able to explain the reasons for your concern.

15.13. Any investigation into concerns of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect you.

15.14. The school will keep the matter confidential as far as possible. Where an investigation confirms the allegations, workers may be required to attend hearings as witnesses.

15.15. Anyone (including managers and co-workers) found to subject a worker who has made a protected disclosure, to inappropriate action under a formal procedure, bullying, harassment, victimisation or detriment, may be subject to disciplinary or other appropriate action.

15.16. An instruction to cover up wrong doing is a disciplinary offence. Workers should report any instances in which they are told not to raise or pursue any concern, even where they are told not to by a person in authority such as a manager.

16. What to do if you have a concern

16.11. You should raise your concern as specified in section 4 of the procedure. If you are not sure if you should raise something it may help to talk things through with your line manager, or to seek advice from the whistleblowing helpline.

17. What to expect when you have raised a concern

17.11. The manager you raise your concern with should meet you to discuss your concern in more detail. He/she will then consider how to handle the matter.

17.12. If the manager believes that the matter can be resolved simply – for example where he/she believes that there has been a misunderstanding, or that you have misinterpreted what has happened – he/she will discuss this with you. If you are happy with the outcome of the discussion the process will end.

17.13. If the manager believes further investigation/action is required, he/she may:

- Make some initial enquiries
- Seek advice from a person/people listed in section 6.2 (referred to as the advising manager(s))

17.14. The manager will contact you again within 10 working days of you raising the concern as stated in section 10 of the procedure. This may be orally or in writing.

17.15. Where possible the matter will be kept confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this may not be possible, for example where the school is required to report a criminal offence.

17.16. You may be required to attend meetings and/or provide a written statement as part of the investigation. You may ask for meetings to be held off site, and you may bring a trade union representative or work colleague to attend meetings. You should inform the manager in advance of the meeting if you intend to bring someone to the meeting with you.

17.17. You may be asked to comment on other evidence gathered during the investigation.

17.18. Where investigation confirms that wrong-doing has occurred you may be required to attend hearings to give evidence.

17.19. Where possible you will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and what, if any, action will be taken as a result.

18. What to do if you believe your concern has not been handled properly

18.11. If you believe that your concern has not been handled properly you can contact the whistleblowing hotline.

18.12. If you are still dissatisfied you may decide to take the matter outside the school as specified in section 9 above. You should make sure you do not disclose personal information about an individual/individuals, or sensitive business information. If in doubt you should contact the whistleblowing help line (see section 5).

Guidance for managers handling concerns

19. What to do when a concern is raised

19.11. Take concerns seriously whether they are raised orally or in writing. Meet with the worker to discuss their concern more fully.

19.12. The worker may request that the meetings are held away from his/her normal place of work. Where possible you should agree with the worker where the meeting will be held.

19.13. The worker has the right to be accompanied at meetings by a trade union representative or work colleague.

19.14. Do not ignore anonymous disclosures – seek advice from the Head Teacher and/or Chair of Governors (see point 4.5.)

19.15. If the matter can be dealt with quickly and easily, for example where there has been a misunderstanding, you should explain the matter to the worker and check that he/she is satisfied that the matter is resolved. Keep a written record of your decision.

19.16. Where the matter needs to be taken further you should discuss how to proceed with those listed in 6.2, as appropriate to the case. This/these person/people will be known as the 'advising manager(s). Where the matter cannot be handled under one of the school's procedures, the advising manager(s) may ask you or another suitable person to investigate the matter further and to present your findings to them.

19.17. Unless the matter has been resolved as described in 18.3 you should contact the worker again within ten days of them raising the concern, as described in point 6.5. Where the concern is serious (that is, if it is a concern that would constitute one of the situations listed in 1.2) you should confirm the key points of your meeting to the worker in writing.

20. Investigating concerns where there is no relevant school procedure

20.11. The advising manager(s) will outline how the concern should be investigated.

20.12. The investigation may involve seeking written statements from the worker and other individuals. Written statements should be signed by those giving them.

20.13. It may be appropriate to ask the worker who raised the concern to comment on additional evidence obtained.

20.14. You should keep records of what you consider during your investigation. For example, make copies of documents, keep notes of interviews, signed witness statements etc.

20.15. At the end of your investigation you should set out your findings in an investigation report and present this to the advising manager(s).

21. Where and when to seek advice

21.11. Unless the matter is a straightforward case of misunderstanding or misinterpretation by the employee, you should seek advice from those listed in 6.2 as appropriate to the case.

22. Keeping records

22.11. If a worker raises a concern with you should keep the following records:

- The date on which the concern was raised
- The part of the school to which the concern relates
- The nature of the concern and its key elements
- Any action taken
- Any feedback that has been provided to the discloser
- Whether or not the discloser has any wishes with regards to confidentiality
- How the matter was resolved

22.12. Records should be kept confidentially and in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

22.13. Once the matter is closed you should forward a copy of the records securely and in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy to the Chair of Governors, and should then securely dispose of your copy.

23. Remedial action

23.11. The advising manager(s) will identify appropriate people within the school who will be responsible for ensuring that any remedial action deemed necessary is implemented. This may include reporting the matter to an appropriate government department, regulatory agency and/or the police.

Advising Manager(s)	Person/people listed in 6.2 from whom the manager receiving the concern seeks advise on how to handle the case

Appendix 1 – Whistleblowing Disclosure Form

This form is intended for use by any individual working for the school (including governors, contractors, agency workers and volunteers) who wishes to raise an issue about serious wrong doing. You must have a reasonable belief in any allegations that you make, and they must be made in the public interest. This form should be used to report wrong-doing within the school (for example, financial irregularities or health and safety concerns), rather than to raise a personal grievance. (If you want to make an allegation of bullying or harassment, or are complaining that your contract of employment has been breached, separate procedures exist for these types of concerns.) If you are unsure about whether your complaint is best dealt with under the school's whistleblowing policy or the grievance procedure, please read the whistleblowing policy, which provides examples of the issues that should be reported using this form. If, having read the whistleblowing policy, you remain unsure about which procedure to use, please consult the Head Teacher or the Chair of Governors (or Service Director Education and SEND where the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors are the subjects of your allegations) for further advice. Once you have submitted this form, the school's whistleblowing procedure will be invoked. This will result in an investigation, which will not involve anyone (for example, your line manager) you may have implicated below. In certain circumstances, you can request that your complaint be kept anonymous. Where possible, the school will respect a request for anonymity, but cannot guarantee that it will be able to do so. This form should be completed and delivered to your line manager/Head Teacher or the Chair of Governors (see sections 4 and 5 of the whistleblowing procedure) in an envelope marked "confidential" or sent as an email attachment with "confidential" in the subject line.	
Formal public interest disclosure (whistleblowing)	
Workers Name	
Workers job title	
School	
Date	
Does your public interest disclosure relate to your line manager?	Yes/No
Summary of disclosure	
Please set out the details of the issue that you wish to raise, providing examples where possible, particularly dates, times, locations and the identities of those involved. You may attach additional sheets if required.	
Individuals involved	
Please provide the names and contact details of any people involved in your complaint, including witnesses.	
Outcome Requested	
Please set out how you would like to see the issue dealt with, and why and how you believe that this will resolve the issue.	
Declaration	

I confirm that the above statements are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that, if I knowingly make false allegations, this may result in the school taking disciplinary action against me.	
Form completed by	
Signature	
For completion by the school	
Date form received	
Name of recipient and job role	
Signature	

Co-Headteachers: **Jacqueline Davies** **Jo Farley**	**Sign:**	**Chair of Management Committee:** **Tim Pritchard**	**Sign:**
Date:		**Date:**	

Change Record				
Version Number	**Date Approved**	**Management Committee** **Minute Reference**	**Description of Amendments**	**Review Date**
1.0	30.11.2017	MC Minutes 30.11.17	PRU policy updated into ic format	Sept2017
1.1	28.10.2018	Vice Chair	Updated academic year	Oct2018
2.0	29.01.2019	Eapproved	Included more relevant contact details	Jan2019
2.1	15.03.2019	Eapproved	Included additional contact and added 'Lead Teacher' rather than 'Line Manager'	18.03.2019
2.2	Sept 2019	Eapproved	FM – review and amend LSCB-BWCSB website details, NSPCC link etc.	24.10.2019
2.3	Sept 2020	Eapproved	FM updated inline with kcsie sept20 and other minor amendments	14.9.2020
2.4			FM updated – minor amendments- dates and contacts.	30.09.2022
2.5	08.10.24	MC group 8.10.24	FM updated – minor amendments- dates and contacts. KCSIE statement changed to updated.	10.09.24
2.6	07.10.25	Approved by MC 07.10.25	FM updated – minor amendments- dates and contacts.	30.09.25
3	06.10.26	MC	Adopted updated WBC model policy for schools-	Oct 26

Keeping Children Safe in Education

All staff at iCollege take seriously their responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people in their care; this includes providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge; protecting children from maltreatment whether that is within or outside the home, including online; preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.