



# Littleton C of E Infant School

## Whistleblowing Policy

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**Governors' Committee Responsible:** Resource

**Policy Originator:** Governing Body – Delegated to Resource Committee

**Review Period:** Annual

**Status:** Statutory

**Next review Date:** September 2018

**This policy must be read in accordance with the Child Protection Policy.**

### Introduction

Littleton Governing Body is committed to the highest possible standards of honesty, openness, probity and accountability. It seeks to conduct its affairs in a responsible manner, to ensure that all council activities are open and effectively managed, and that the council's integrity and principles of public interest disclosure are sustained.

In line with that commitment we encourage employees and others who have serious concerns to voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will proceed on a confidential basis.

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong. However, staff may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, it may be easier to ignore the concern, rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice. Littleton Governing Body believes that it is the responsibility of each member of staff to realise that they not only have the right, but also a moral duty to report any improper actions or omissions.

Littleton Governing Body also recognises and appreciates that staff who raise concerns regarding malpractice or wrongdoing are an asset to the council, and not a threat. This policy makes it clear that they can raise concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. The Whistle Blowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns rather than overlooking a problem or "blowing the whistle" outside.

The policy applies to all employees, whether full-time or part time, permanent or temporary, as well as contractors working for the school e.g. agency staff, builders,

drivers. It also covers providers of works, services and supplies, including external contractors.

### **The Purpose of the Policy:**

- To encourage employees to feel confident in raising serious concerns, to question and act upon their concerns about practice
- To provide them with a method of raising concerns and receive feedback on how this is being followed up
- To ensure employees receive a response to their concerns and they are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied
- To reassure employees that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have reasonable belief that they have made any disclosure in good faith.

### **Rationale and Accountability**

The School and LA operate within legal requirements and regulations and expects all employees to co-operate in this by adhering to all laws, regulations, policies and procedures.

Staff must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior management and/or relevant agencies. Although this can be difficult this is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express your concerns out of a feeling that this would be disloyal to colleagues or you may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember it is often the most vulnerable children or young person who is targeted. These children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all staff working with children and young people in education settings including maintained schools and is in line with Surrey County Council "Whistleblowing Policy" October 2013.

The Whistle Blowing Policy is intended to cover concerns which fall outside the scope of other procedures including:

- Conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- Dangerous procedures or practice risking Health and Safety, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- Damage to the environment
- Dangerous Practices
- The unauthorised use of public funds
- Inappropriate use of the LA's Standing Orders, Financial procedures or Contract
- Regulations
- Fraud or corruption
- Practice which falls below established standards or practice
- Action which is contrary to the code of conduct for employees
- Sexual or physical abuse of pupils or others
- Other unethical conduct.

## Concerns

Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour.

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the staff member's identity.

## Reasons for 'whistle-blowing'

- To prevent the problem worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To safeguard children
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself

Staff includes any adult, paid or voluntary, who works in a school or educational establishment within the LA.

## What stops people from 'whistle-blowing'

- Starting a chain of events which spirals
- Disrupting work or events
- Fear of getting it wrong
- Fear or repercussions or damaging careers
- Fear of not being believed

## How to raise a concern

- Try to be clear exactly what it is concerning you and why
- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken
- Ideally you should put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates and places where you can
- Anonymous concerns are much less powerful and will be considered at the discretion of the Governing Body
- Approach your immediate Headteacher
- If your concern is about the Headteacher, contact the Chair of Governors, Tim Rose 07966 031 432.
- A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for concern
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don't let matters rest
- NSPCC Advice line [0800 028 0285](tel:08000280285)
- Don't think what if I am wrong – think what if I am right?

## How the school will respond

- Advice from the Personnel Consultant will be taken to decide whether an investigation is appropriate or should be considered under the scope of other internal procedures (e.g. Grievance, Child Protection) or external bodies (e.g. Surrey Internal Audit, Police) or for unlawful activity, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services at Surrey County Council
- School will attempt to ensure confidentiality but cannot promise to do so

- If urgent action required, this will take place before investigation.
- Within 10 days, the manager will write to the employee (or Expolink2 where this was the reporting route) recognising concerns, outlining how it will be dealt with, advise whether initial enquiries have been made, estimate time scales and offer the employee personal support and inform them if the concern will be investigated further, if not, why not?
- If an employee is not satisfied with these outcomes, s/he should contact the Chair of Governors – Tim Rose on 07966 031 432, a Union, the Local Education Officer, Police or “Public Concern at Work” (0207-404-6609). The unreasonable and unjustifiable raising of issues on a wider basis (e.g. the Press) will result in disciplinary procedures
- As a result of the outcome of an investigation, working practices may be changed to ensure that a similar situation does not occur again
- Where the concern was raised via Expolink, the employee will be invited to contact the service for feedback at an appropriate time.

*(Expolink – Freephone 0800-374-199. This is an external and independent organisation which provides a confidential hotline service for whistle blowing. Expolink can be contacted at any time, night or day, in complete confidence with any relevant concerns)*

### **Further advice and support**

This policy is intended to provide members of staff with an avenue to raise concerns internally. If the member of staff feels that it is right to take the matter outside the School, contact can be made with a recognised trade union, local Citizens Advice Bureau, relevant voluntary or independent organisation or legal advisor. The Public Interest Disclosure Act also sets out a number of bodies to which protected disclosures can be made, including HM Revenue and Customs, the FSA, the Health and Safety Executive and the Serious Fraud Office. Employees should be aware that going directly to the press may limit their protection under the Public Interest Disclosure Act and they could therefore be subject to disciplinary action. An employee considering such a course of action is strongly advised to seek prior advice from their trade union or an independent organisation such as Public Concern at Work ([www.pcaw.co.uk](http://www.pcaw.co.uk)).

It is recognised that “whistle blowing” can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from the line manager, personnel department and professional/trade union.

### **Monitoring Arrangements**

The purpose of monitoring is to assess whether:

- The policy is being used appropriately
- Concerns are being handled and investigated properly
- There are patterns of concern across the school
- The policy has been effective in identifying malpractice
- The policy has been effective in deterring malpractice
- More needs to be done to raise awareness of the policy

This policy should be read in accordance with the Child Protection Safeguarding Policy.