

Grand Avenue Primary & Nursery School

Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy Agreed Summer 2020 To be reviewed Summer 2023

Mission Statement

At Grand Avenue we aim to work together to provide education of the highest quality within a caring and stimulating environment.

Introduction

Grand Avenue Primary & Nursery School is committed to ensuring that it acts with integrity and has high standards. Everyone involved with the school has a responsibility in respect of preventing and detecting fraud. All staff and governors have a role to play. The school also recognizes the role of others in alerting them to areas where there is suspicion of fraud.

Recognising a potential fraud and being able to report it is just as important as the measures to prevent and detect. How to report a suspected fraud is outlined below. The areas that are most likely, on the basis of experience in Local Government, to be subject to attempted fraud are outlined under Key Risk Areas.

The Principal Roles

Staff and Governors

Grand Avenue Primary & Nursery School has adopted the following measures to demonstrate its commitment:

- All staff and governors are made aware of the Local Authority Code of Conduct for Employees –
- A Resource and Finance Committee
- A requirement for all staff and governors to declare prejudicial interests and not contribute to business related to that interest
- A requirement for staff and governors to disclose personal interests
- All staff and governors are made aware of the understanding on the acceptance of gifts and hospitality
- Clear recruitment policies and procedures
- A code of conduct for employees
- A staff handbook

Staff and governors also have a duty to report another staff or governor whose conduct is reasonably believed to represent a failure to comply with the above.

The headteacher has a responsibility for ensuring that internal controls will ensure proper administration and safeguard the resources of the school.

In respect of fraud it is therefore the responsibility of the headteacher and school bursar to ensure internal controls prevent and detect any frauds promptly. This includes:

- Proper procedures and financial systems;
- Effective management and financial information;
- Completion of an annual statement of internal control (SIC)

The Local Authority

The Local Authority has a unique role in taking responsibility for;

- Investigating fraud;
- Establishing the extent of any fraud;
- Correcting accounting records if necessary;
- Recommending improvements in internal control;
- Advising on action to take to resolve the matter arising.

Principal Anti-Fraud Measures

Grand Avenue Primary & Nursery School has taken a number of measures that should prevent or detect any attempted or actual fraud. While it is recognized that no system of control can prevent all cases, the school puts measures in place to minimize the risks to which it is exposed. The school will:

- Regularly review and improve key internal control systems;
- Regularly review measures to minimize the risk of fraud;
- Involve staff in such reviews;
- Adopt formal procedures to investigate fraud when it is suspected and where detected, strengthen controls to prevent reoccurrence;
- Provide mechanisms for employees to voice their genuine concerns
- Have no hesitation in referring cases of suspected financial irregularity to the attention of the Police and the Local Authority;
- Work closely with the Police and the other appropriate agencies to combat fraud.

Other measures include the introduction of corporate standards that should ensure proper administration. These include staff contracts and the annual renewal of:

- SFVS
- Contract standing orders
- Codes of Conduct for governors and staff
- Measures to implement new legislation correctly
- A clearly defined role for the Resource & Finance Committee
- Clear roles for governors
- Training administration issues
- Disciplinary Procedures;
- Complaints Procedures

These measures, and others, provide a framework supported by detailed procedure manuals for all key functions of the school. Other key principle internal controls that are adopted include wherever possible:

- Adequate separation of duties
- Proper authorization procedures
- A proper audit trail
- Independent monitoring and checking
- Training of employees in their duties
- Appropriate supervision
- Effective management structures and organization
- Physical controls over highly portable assets
- Effective IT and other security measures

- A proper accounting and budgetary control system
- Effective Internal Audit review systems.

Responsibility for effective implementation of these principles on internal control rests with the headteacher and school bursar and involves every member of staff and the governing body.

Reporting a Suspected Fraud

Response to Alleged Frauds

All suspected fraud and irregularities will be referred to the headteacher, unless the headteacher is involved in the irregularity in which case the chair of governors should be informed.

All reported irregularities will be thoroughly investigated, with due regard to the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998, Data Protection Act 1998, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the school's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Steps that would normally be taken are:

- If an employee suspects a fraud has occurred (or is likely to) they should report this to their line manager who must inform the headteacher, unless the suspicion relates to the line manager. In this instance the employee should report to the headteacher or chair of governors.
- The headteacher will inform chair of governors unless the suspicion relates to the chair of governors when the headteacher will contact the Head of the Local Authority without consultation with the chair of governors;
- If an employee suspects a fraud has occurred (or is likely to) and believe that their line manager, headteacher and chair of governors may be involved, then they can report any concerns direct to the Head of Internal Audit at the Local Authority.
- If suspicions stem from an Internal Audit assignment, the Head of Internal Audit, will inform the headteacher or the chair of governors;
- Members of the public can report any concerns, either to the headteacher, chair of governors, their Councillor, the Director of Finance and Resources, Head of Internal Audit, the Council's External Auditor, or via the Complaints Procedure;
- The Director of Finance and Resources will decide on the level of any investigation. If necessary the Director of Finances and Resources will involve the Chief Executive Officer and the Solicitor to the Council. The Internal Audit Service will carry out any investigation, reporting to the Director of Finance and Resources;
- If investigations indicate a criminal offence may have occurred, the Director of Finance and Resources will decide, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer and Solicitor to the Council, to handle the matter according to the school's Disciplinary Procedures and involve the Police;
- Recommendations to improve controls and prevent any reoccurrence will be made by Internal Audit. The headteacher and chair of governors, in

consultation with the Director of Finance and Resources, will decide on the implementation of the recommendations.

Reporting Suspicions

General

Employees are vital to the successful implementation of measures against fraud. Employees have a duty to report any legitimate concerns they may have and must do so as outlined above.

If it is subsequently established that an employee knowingly withholds information of a concern or allegation it may be dealt with as a disciplinary matter in itself.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (a copy of which can be found at www.opsi.gov.uk) provides employees with statutory protection when disclosing such information.

Where possible, concerns are better raised in writing, setting out the background, giving names, dates and places and reasons for bringing the matter to the attention of the appropriate person

However, if an individual feels unable to put their concern in writing, arrangements should be made to meet with an appropriate person to discuss the concerns.

Confidentiality and Safeguards

The school recognizes that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the alleged malpractice. Harassment or victimization will not be tolerated and the school will do what it lawfully can to protect an individual when a concern is raised in good faith.

This does not mean that if the person raising the concern is already the subject of a disciplinary, redundancy or other procedure, that those procedures will be halted as a result of the concern being reported.

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in the strictest confidence. The school will do its best to protect the identity of individuals who raise concerns and do not want their name to be revealed. However, it must be appreciated that during an investigation, a statement may be required as part of the evidence gathering process, particularly if the Police or External Auditors become involved. In order to take effective action, the school will need proper evidence that may be required to stand up to examination in Courts or Tribunals.

This Policy Statement encourages individuals to put a name to allegations whenever possible, as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but will be considered at the discretion of the school in terms of;

- Seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the concern
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

Whilst the school will always do its best to protect individuals, it is more difficult to protect an individual from harassment, intimidation or other detrimental conduct where an allegation or disclosure is made anonymously.

Safeguards

There is a need to ensure that the process is not misused. Therefore, any abuse, such as raising malicious allegations may also be dealt with as a disciplinary matter. All such reports must be genuine and honest as, to be otherwise, would go against the principle of integrity.

This should not deter employees from raising legitimate and genuine concerns, (even if subsequently unfounded but made with good intent) as, in doing so they will be supported in every possible way.

All genuine concerns reported will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. If a suspicion is reported and results in a prosecution or disciplinary hearing, employees involvement, as a witness, in this process may be necessary, unless other substantial reliable evidence is available. Employees taking such a route will be notified quickly and any action taken.

Grand Avenue Primary & Nursery School accepts that the person reporting the suspicion needs to be assured that the matter is being properly addressed. Therefore, where possible, and subject to legal constraints (including Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Act) feedback regarding the outcome of the investigation will be provided.

Employees must also report other abuses which may be of concern including unethical behaviour, falsification of records, sexual discrimination or harassment, abuse of drugs or alcohol, bullying and non compliance with Health and Safety.

Key Risk Areas

The following are key risk areas the school will review as part of its Anti Fraud Policy :

- Computer Fraud
- Grants
- Contracting and Contract Payments
- Travelling and Subsistence or specific expense claims
- Cash Handling & Cash Collection Procedures
- Assets
- Gifts and Hospitality
- Loans and Investments
- Creditor Payments
- Payroll

Cash Handling Procedures

- Cash received for school trips/workshops is logged and recorded by the school receptionist into the school comms system. All other cash received is logged by the Business manager or Finance manager in the relevant file.
- Cash is not left unattended. If it is necessary for the receptionist or finance office to leave the room, the cash is locked in a safe.
- The safe can only be opened by the School Business Manager, Finance assistant and Office manager.
- All cash is banked on a regular basis by the School business manager and Finance manager.
- All documentation relating to cash handling is retained for a minimum period of 6 years.

Definitions

Fraud:

Fraud is a general term covering theft, deliberate misuse or misappropriation of assets or anything that leads to a financial advantage to the perpetrator or others upon whose behalf he or she acts, even if these “others” are in ignorance of the fraud. Fraud is in fact intentional deceit and for this reason it cannot include negligence.

Fraud incorporates – theft, larceny, embezzlement, fraudulent conversion, false pretences, forgery, corrupt practices and falsification of accounts.

Corruption:

The term ‘corrupt practices’ is defined for the purpose of this code as the offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward which may influence the actions taken by the school, its staff or governors.

It is the duty of the school, its employees and governors to take reasonable steps to limit the possibility of corrupt practices.

It is the responsibility of Internal Audit to review the adequacy of the measure taken by the school, to test compliance and to draw attention to any weaknesses or omissions.

Review

The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy will be subject to review in accordance with the school policy review cycle.