

Grand Avenue Primary and Nursery School

Whistle Blowing Policy

Agreed by staff and Governors - Summer term 2020

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Introduction

What is whistle blowing?

Someone blows the whistle when they tell someone in authority about an illegal or dangerous activity that they are aware of at work.

This procedure does not replace the Governing Body's Complaints Procedure. Whistle Blowing is about concerns regarding public interest. Any issues regarding personal positions at work should be undertaken through contact with the Human Resources department.

Why is whistle blowing important?

The leaders and managers at Grand Avenue Primary and Nursery School have a duty to prevent dangerous or illegal actions at work. The Governing Body is committed to high quality care for all members of the school community; this includes being open, honest and fair.

All staff have an crucial part to play in a Whistle Blowing situation as often it is only through Whistle Blowing that certain important information comes to light. A summary of the Whistle Blowing procedures can be found within the School Handbook. The procedures are discussed at the beginning of every academic year in a staff meeting and form part of Induction meetings for all volunteers, students and other adults spending time in school.

Aims

This whistle blowing policy aims to

- Support the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Encourage staff to raise concerns within the school rather than overlooking them
- Give staff a way of raising concerns in a structured and supportive environment
- Give staff confidence to talk about genuinely held concerns without fear of recrimination
- Show that the Governing Body has a commitment to investigating and taking action where perceived wrongdoing is disclosed

Who can use the whistle blowing policy?

This policy applies to all staff, whether full time, part time, permanent or temporary. It includes governors, parents, students, staff on supply, volunteers and contractors. The term 'staff' will be used in this policy to include all these roles.

When should concerns be raised?

Concerns should be raised if a member of staff is aware of any activity that may harm the school, colleagues working for the Governing Body or the Governing Body.

Examples could be the actions of staff which fall below the Governing Body's standards of practice, which are against the policy of the school or amount to improper conduct. These may also include but are not limited to; illegal activities, miscarriages of justice, risks to health and safety, damage to the environment, misuse of public funds, fraud and corruption or attempts to cover up wrongdoing.

The Process

Who to tell?

A member of staff who needs to report activity which may harm the school should in the first instance approach the Headteacher. If this is not possible or appropriate then the Chair of Governors can be contacted through the Clerk to the Governing Body. clerk@grandvenue.kingston.sch.uk

Other points of contact could be through the Local Authority, eg, Director of Children's Services, the Chief Executive or the Director of Finance.

How to disclose

A concern may be raised in writing or verbally. Staff raising a concern may ask for the support of a staff representative to accompany them as they outline their issues. The member of staff is encouraged to write notes regarding their concerns, including dates and times of the offence, if applicable.

When raising a concern the member of staff is not expected to prove the case but to give background and reasons for the concern. The Headteacher will keep minutes of this meeting.

Should the disclosure involve the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will listen to and record the concerns, and take appropriate action.

Next steps

The concern will be investigated. Depending on the nature of the concern this may involve an internal investigation, an external auditor, an independent enquiry or the police.

The staff member raising the concern will be contacted in writing within 10 days of reporting their case. Information will be given with regards to who is handling the matter, how to contact them and whether further information is needed.

Support available for the whistle blower /will also be shared.

Internal Investigation

If an internal investigation is deemed appropriate a special investigations team will be set up by the Headteacher and /or The Governing Body. This team will be responsible for gathering all relevant information and meeting with all relevant staff. The team will create a written report outlining the findings of the investigation.

The report is taken to the Senior Leadership Team and/or Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and the findings considered. Based on the findings of the report, further action to be taken will be decided. This may include a verbal warning, written warning or further disciplinary action for anyone involved in any wrongdoing.

If the findings of the investigation show that the concerns raised are malicious, frivolous or for personal gain then disciplinary action will be taken against the whistle blower.

Depending on any legal restrictions the whistle blower will be informed in writing of the outcome of any investigation.

Anonymous whistle blowing

At the request of the whistle blower an investigation can be undertaken without involving the name of the member of staff raising the concerns. If this is not possible then the Governing Body will not reveal the sources of the concern without discussing this with the whistle blower first.

The Governing Body discourages anonymous whistle blowing as concerns are then more difficult to investigate. Feedback is also deemed impossible.

The Governing Body does not permit harassment or victimisation of anyone who has raised a genuine concern. Harassment may result in disciplinary action.

Public Disclosure Act

The Public Disclosure Act 1998 provides workers with protection from dismissal or other damage, as a result of making a disclosure of information in the public interest about wrongdoing at work.

Independent Advice

Should further independent advice be needed on whistle blowing staff are encouraged to contact their union, an independent legal advisor or lawyer. Public Concern at Work Lawyers can give free confidential advice on 0207 404 6609 - contact details checked Summer 2020.