



# WILLIAM FARR

C of E Comprehensive School

## Whistleblowing (Public Disclosure) Policy

### Vision and values

William Farr (C of E) Comprehensive School's vision is to provide all members of the school community with the opportunities to engage with 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10) through the highest quality of education, encouragement and endeavour. We are committed to striving for excellence and ensuring that all students are known, valued and can achieve.

Our core values are:

*Compassion      Friendship      Perseverance      Respect      Responsibility      Wisdom*

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Employees may often be among the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the School. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the School. They may also fear harassment or victimisation however unjustified this may be. In these circumstances, it is often easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.
- 1.2 The School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment the School encourages employees and others with serious concerns about any aspect of the School's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis. This policy document makes it clear that staff can do so without fear of reprisals. This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable staff to raise serious concerns within the School rather than overlook a problem or blow the whistle outside.

### 2 Aims and scope of this policy

- 2.1 This policy aims to:
  - Provide avenues for employees to raise their concerns and received feedback on any action taken;
  - Allows employees to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the School's response; and,
  - Reassure employees that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith.
- 2.2 There are existing procedures in place to enable employees to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment. This whistleblowing policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures.
  - 2.2.1 That concern may be about something that:

- Is unlawful; or,
- Is against the School's policies and procedures; or,
- Falls below established standards or practice; or,
- Amounts to improper conduct.

### **3 Safeguards**

#### **3.1 Harassment or victimisation**

3.1.1 The School recognises 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 malpractice. The School will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take all reasonable action to protect staff when employees raise a concern in good faith.

3.2 This does not mean that if employees are already the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures, those procedures will be halted as a result of their whistleblowing.

#### **3.3 Confidentiality**

3.3.1 The School will do its best to protect the identity of employees when they raise a concern and do not want their name to be disclosed. However, it must be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by the employee may be required as part of any evidence.

#### **3.4 Anonymous allegations**

3.4.1 This policy encourages employees to put their name to their allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful; however, they may be considered at the discretion of the School.

#### **3.5 Untrue allegations**

3.5.1 If an employee(s) make an allegation in proven good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If, however, employees make malicious or vexatious allegations, disciplinary action will be taken against them.

### **4 How to raise a concern**

4.1 As a first step, employees should normally raise concerns with their Line Manager. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice. If more appropriate, any member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) may be approached.

4.2 Concerns can then be expressed in writing. Employees are invited to set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible and the reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation. If they do not feel able to put their concern in writing, they can meet with their Line Manager (or other appropriate person) to agree a statement.

4.3 The earlier employees express a concern; the easier it is to take action.

4.4 Although employees are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation they will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for their concern.

### **5 How the School will respond**

5.1 The Headteacher will designate a member of SLT to investigate the concerns and to write a report on the matter. The Headteacher will then decide if there is a case to answer and will invoke the disciplinary procedures of the school if necessary.

5.3 Within 10 working days of a concern being received, the Headteacher will write to the employee:

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- Indicating how he/she proposes to deal with the matter;
- Giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- Informing employees whether any initial enquiries have been made.

5.4 The amount of contact between the individual considering the issues and the employee will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved, and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from the employee.

5.5 When any meeting is arranged, employees have the right, if they so wish, to be accompanied by a representative or a work colleague who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

5.6 The School will take steps to minimise any difficulties which employees may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if employees are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the School will advise them about the procedure and provide any external support as required.

5.7 The School accepts that employees need to be assured that the matter has been appropriately addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, employees will receive information about the outcome of any investigation.

## **6 How the matter can be taken further**

6.1 This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue to raise concerns within the School. The School hopes employees will be satisfied. If staff do not feel that the correct procedures have been followed they have the right to appeal to the Governing Body.

6.1.1 If employees do take the matter outside the School, they need to ensure that they do not disclose confidential information or ensure that the disclosure would be privileged. If in doubt this must be checked with the Headteacher or the Chair of the Governing Body.

## **7 The Responsible Officer**

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. The Headteacher will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcome (but in a form which does not endanger employee confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Governing Body.

7.1 If the issue relates to the Headteacher, the staff member should refer all matters initially to a member of the SLT and ultimately to the Chair of the Governing Body.