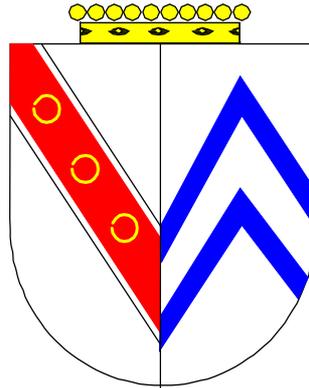


THE DAWNAY SCHOOL



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Reviewed by: Josephine Snell /Annette Di Giovanna

Approved by Governors: Spring 2017

Review Date: Spring 2019

Responsibility: PPF Committee

Status: Recommended

Based on Babcock model policy February 2012

School Admin/Policies

Purpose

The Dawnay School is committed to maintaining a culture of honesty, openness, accountability and integrity. It seeks to conduct its affairs in a responsible manner to ensure that all its activities are openly and effectively managed, and that the school's integrity and the principles of public interest disclosures are sustained.

As such, we seek to ensure that employees feel secure in raising concerns about malpractice, impropriety or any activity which may harm individuals or undermine the status of the school.

Staff not only have the right, but also a duty to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior management and/or relevant agencies, particularly where the welfare of children may be at risk.

The Governing Body is mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and this policy will be applied fairly and consistently to all staff employed at the school as well as those carrying out work for the school.

Aims and scope of policy

You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express your concerns as you may feel that this would be disloyal to colleagues or you may fear harassment or victimisation.

With regard to children, these feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember it is often, but not exclusively, the most vulnerable children or young people who are targeted. All these children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare.

'Don't think what if I'm wrong - think what if I'm right'

This policy aims to:

- Encourage staff to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns and practice
- Provide avenues to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- Ensure that staff receive a response to their concerns and that they are made aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied
- Reassure staff that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have made any disclosure in good faith

In drawing up this policy the governors referred to Surrey County Council LA 'Speaking Out' Policy (March 2009), the full policy can be found on the Babcock 4S website or a copy can be made available in school. This Policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures, in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

It covers:

- Conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public or pupils as well as other staff
- Damage to the environment
- Information relating to the above issues that has been or is likely to be , deliberately concealed

Examples of the above categories are likely to include:

- The unauthorised use or misuse of public funds
- Possible fraud and corruption
- Sexual, physical or psychological abuse of pupils at the school

- Harassment and bullying of staff
- Breaches of codes of conduct
- Malpractice in examinations and assessments

Relationship to other policies

The policy relates to the school's Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy, Discipline (Staff) Policy and the Schools Financial Values Standard.

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the staff member's identity if they so wish. At the appropriate time, however, they may need to come forward as a witness and this will be discussed with them.

Roles and responsibilities - Reasons for whistle blowing

Each individual has a responsibility:

- For raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To prevent becoming implicated themselves

What stops people from whistle blowing?

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

How to raise a concern

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can, normally with your immediate line manager, the Headteacher or the school's Designated Child Protection Officer (Josephine Snell) The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken.
- If the concern is about the Headteacher then the matter should be taken up with the Chair of Governors, Stephen Wade (contact via school office: 01372 456774). Make sure you get a satisfactory response - don't let matters rest. If the whistle blower feels the need to involve a person external to the school, his/her trade union/professional association or the Local Education Officer (LEO) may be consulted.
- Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing, ideally the latter, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates and places where you can and an indication of why you are particularly concerned about the situation.
- A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.
- A member of staff has the right to seek advice from their trade union representative and/or personnel consultant at Babcock 4S.
- Dependent of the type of concern raised, reference to other relevant school policies, guidelines and processes will also be considered.

- If it is necessary to consult outside the school, the first contact for all child protection issues should be the LEO (Local education officer).
- **Expolink** - while the school encourages members of staff to raise their concerns internally, the School also realises that some staff may feel unable to do this and that they may therefore wish to contact an independent, external organisation such as Expolink to report the concern. Expolink can be used if you have concerns that another person, acting on behalf of the School, is involved in criminal activity, fraud, theft or damage to School property or reputation.

Expolink

Freephone 0800 374199

Expolink is an external and independent organisation which provides a confidential hotline service for whistle blowing. Expolink can be contacted any time, night or day, in complete confidence with any relevant concerns. The call will not be traced or monitored.

When you call, Expolink's trained call handlers will ask you to provide details of the event that you are concerned about. You will not have to give your name or phone number if you don't want to. Instead you will be provided with a unique reference number so that if you want to call back with more information the reports can be linked or if you want feedback on progress this can be provided. However, if you give your details to Expolink, these will not be passed to Surrey County Council without your express permission. Giving your contact details can help as we can ask Expolink to contact you if we need more information to help with the investigation. Expolink will then type up a report, which will be sent securely to one of the Council's authorised recipients depending on the nature of the complaint. As soon as Expolink receives confirmation that we have the report they destroy their copy. Your concern will then be dealt with in line with Surrey's Speaking Out Policy.

Self reporting

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. A member of staff has a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their line manager so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned. Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most instances, this cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children or financial integrity of the school.

How will the school respond – what will happen next?

In order to protect the individuals involved, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take and who should be appointed to conduct it. The overriding principle is that of the public interest. If urgent action is required, e.g. if the welfare of pupils may be at risk, this action will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- Your employer has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation.
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence.
- The governing body will monitor awareness of the policy as part of its regular surveys of staff and exit interviews.
- Any complaints and the action taken will be documented and a summary included in the head teacher's termly report to the governors, with advice on any implications for policies and practice.

Communication

Within 10 working days of a concern being raised, the person who is dealing with the concern will respond in writing either to the employee directly or to Expolink where this was the reporting route. The response will:

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- Acknowledge receipt of the concern
- Indicate how the School proposes to deal with the matter
- Give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Advise whether any initial enquires have been made
- Supply information on any staff support mechanisms
- Advise whether further investigations or action are required and, if not, why not.

Investigation

If there is a need for an investigation, an appropriate person will be appointed to conduct the investigation. The person appointed is responsible for establishing the facts of the matter, as far as it is reasonably possible to do so, and assessing whether the concern has foundation and can be resolved internally. Other people may need to be interviewed to provide further information and/or clarification concerning the issues(s) raised.

Written records will be kept of all interviews undertaken together with details of any actions undertaken. The investigation will result in a written report and recommendations for corrective actions, which will be passed to the Headteacher and /or Chair of the Governing Body as appropriate to the concerns under consideration, to determine whether formal action should be taken.

The member of staff raising the concern will, subject to legal constraints, be advised in writing of the outcome of the investigation and, where appropriate, what action is being taken. This may, for example include a change to working practices 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 the appropriate time.

Taking matters further

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 Health and Safety Executives and the serious Fraud office.

Employers 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 as 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.pcaaw.co.uk)

Monitoring and Reporting

The governing body is responsible for overseeing the operation of this policy and for ensuring that appropriate records are maintained regarding concerns raised and the outcomes. It is also responsible for reporting concerns to officers at Surrey County Council and to other external bodies as appropriate to the circumstances. In reviewing this policy every two years, the Governing Body will have regard to the council's whistle blowing procedures in force at the time of review.

Relevant Contact Details

Designated Child Protection Officer: Josephine Snell, Telephone: 07789007897

Local Education Office: Telephone 01737 737959; **Babcock 4S:** Telephone 0800 073 4444

Chair of Governors: Stephen Wade, Telephone: 01372 456774 (school office)

Surrey County Council's Internal Audit Team: Telephone 020 8541 9299