

WEXHAM COURT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Whistleblowing Policy

2026 - 2028



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WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

1. DEFINITION

Whistleblowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is “in the public interest”. Examples of whistleblowing include (but are not limited to):

- o Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- o Pupils’ or staff health and safety being put in danger
- o Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- o Breaches of financial management procedures
- o Sexual harassment (in effect from 6 April 2026)
- o Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest
- o Damage to the environment

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above. These concerns should be reported under this policy.

Not all concerns about the trust, or individual schools in the trust, count as whistleblowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistleblowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability in the delivery of its services to the people who live and work within the Borough. Whilst the local authority has put in place a wide range of rules, regulations, procedures and codes of practice to deliver this commitment, malpractice and/or wrongdoing unfortunately may occur.
- 2.2 This policy sets out the principles within which the School will deal with whistleblowing issues, subject to the understanding that each case may need to be treated on its own individual merits. This policy applies to all school staff, teaching and non-teaching and supply teachers (including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed term or those on a temporary contract).
- 2.3 Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the School. However, you may be worried about raising such issues or may want to keep the concerns to yourself because you may consider that it is none of your business or that it is only a suspicion. You may also feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to your colleagues, managers or to the authority itself. Also, you may decide to say something but

find that you have not spoken to the right person, or you have raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next. It is worth remembering that your Trade Union, professional organisation or regulatory body can play a valuable role in assisting you raise your concerns under this policy.

- 2.4 The School is not prepared to tolerate any such malpractice, abuse or wrongdoing and it expects employees, and others that we deal with, who have concerns about what is happening at work to come forward and voice those concerns. This policy has been introduced by the School to enable you to raise your concerns about such malpractice or wrongdoing at an early stage and in the right way, without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. The policy is intended to encourage and enable you to raise concerns within the School (see Section 5).
- 2.5 The School has particular responsibility for protecting the welfare of children and employees are under an obligation to raise concerns about the abuse of such clients. This policy should be read in conjunction with our policies on Safeguarding and Child Protection, and Allegations Against Staff.
- 2.6 The following guidance applies to this policy:
- Public Concern at Work report, February 2013
 - DFE non-statutory guidance “Whistleblowing Procedure for Maintained Schools”
 - Working Together to Safeguard Children

3. INDEPENDENT ADVICE

- 3.1 If you are unsure whether to use this procedure or you want independent advice at any stage, you may contact: -

PUBLIC CONCERN AT WORK
The Green House,
244-254 Cambridge Heath Road,
LONDON, E2 9DA.
Tel. No. 020 3117 2520
<https://protect-advice.org.uk>

- 3.2 Public Concern at Work is a registered charity which promotes accountability and good governance in organisations and responsibility amongst individuals. It has been at the forefront of recent developments in self-regulation and public interest Whistleblowing. Its lawyers can give you free, confidential advice at any stage about how to raise a concern about serious wrongdoings or malpractice at work.

Alternatively, you may wish to seek assistance from your Trade Union or professional organisation.

4. WHAT IS MALPRACTICE, ABUSE OR WRONGDOING?

- 4.1 Malpractice, abuse and wrongdoing can include a whole variety of issues, and some are listed in **Appendix A**. However, this is not a comprehensive list but is intended to illustrate the sorts of issues which may be raised under this policy.
- 4.2 This policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the School itself are at risk and thus if you are aggrieved as an employee about your personal position then you should use the School's existing Grievance Procedure.

5. THE SCHOOL'S ASSURANCES TO EMPLOYEES

- 5.1 If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of retribution as a result. The School will view very seriously any false and malicious allegations which are made under this policy and will regard such allegations by any employee of the School as a serious disciplinary offence.
- 5.2 The School will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern.
- 5.3 If you ask us to protect your identity by keeping your confidence, we will not disclose it without your consent. However, it is possible that we will be unable to resolve the concern raised without revealing your identity (e.g., because your evidence is needed in Court) but if this occurs, we will discuss with you how we can proceed.

6. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

- 6.1 Any concerns that you have may be raised orally or in writing and those who wish to make a written statement should set out the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates) and the reasons why you are particularly concerned about the situation. The earlier you express your concern the easier it will be to take action. **REMEMBER - IF IN DOUBT RAISE IT.**
- 6.2 The School will not expect you to prove that your concern is true, but you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for you to raise the issue.
- 6.3 It is perfectly acceptable for you to discuss your concern professionally with a colleague and you may find it more comforting to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns. This does not mean you should then continue to discuss your concern without reporting it or discuss it further with colleagues.

- 6.4 If you are an employee and have a concern about any malpractice, abuse or wrongdoing you should raise it first with your Line Manager or their superior. If you feel unable to raise the matter with your Line Manager or their superior, then please raise the matter with your Headteacher.
- 6.5 If the above channels have been followed and you still have concerns or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with your Line Manager, their superior or your Headteacher or you consider that it is not appropriate to do so then you can contact the Chair of Governors.

7. HOW THE SCHOOL WILL HANDLE THE MATTER

- 7.1 Once you have told us of your concern, we will investigate it to assess initially what action should be taken. This may involve an internal enquiry or a more formal investigation. We will tell you who is handling the matter, how you can contact him/her and whether your further assistance may be needed. If you request, we will write to you summarising your concern and set out how we propose to handle it.
If you have raised the issue orally, you will be asked to put your concerns into writing, which you should date and sign.
- 7.2 It may be necessary to arrange a meeting with you and if you so wish you can be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or a work colleague.
- 7.3 Where it is considered appropriate, the matters raised may be referred to external agencies to investigate, e.g., the Police, external auditor or through some other form of independent inquiry. We will of course, tell you if this is going to happen.
- 7.4 Within 10 working days of a concern being raised by you, the person handling the matter will write to you: -
- (a) acknowledging that the concern has been received.
 - (b) indicating how we propose to deal with the matter.
 - (c) giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response.
 - (d) telling you whether any initial enquiries are being made.
 - (e) supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms.
 - (f) telling you whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.
- 7.5 Whilst the purpose of this policy is to enable us to investigate your concerns of malpractice, abuse or wrongdoing and take appropriate steps to deal with it, we will give you as much feedback as we properly can. Please note that we may not be able to tell you the precise action we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed by us to someone else.

7.6 The School will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising the concern. Thus, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the School will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.

8. ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

8.1 You are encouraged to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.

There are circumstances under which complete confidentiality may be difficult to maintain, for example:

- If the matter leads to a legal procedure and evidence is needed in Court.
- If the issue raised is within the remit of another school procedure and you are asked to provide a signed statement as part of the evidence, therefore revealing your identity.
- When the safeguarding of children is an issue.

8.2 Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the School. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include: -

- (a) the seriousness of the issues raised
- (b) the credibility of the concern
- (c) the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

8.3 If you do raise a concern anonymously and it is considered then it will not be possible for you to be contacted, for instance to inform you of the outcome of your concern or to discuss any aspect of your concern.

9. IF YOU ARE DISSATISFIED WITH THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSE

9.1 If you are dissatisfied with the school's response, you can raise the matter within 10 working days of the date of the school's response by writing to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.

The Headteacher/Chair of Governors will write to you within 5 working days of receiving the letter to arrange a meeting to discuss the continuing concerns and why you remain dissatisfied. Again, you may be accompanied by a friend or representative of your trade union.

The Headteacher/Chair of Governors may then decide to investigate further and will need to decide what action to take. You will be updated with the outcome of the meeting within 5 working days.

9.2

- If you remain dissatisfied with the response at from any action taken under Section 8.1, you may wish to raise the matter externally within 10 working days of the date of the decision letter at Section 8.1. If you feel that the governors of a maintained school have not dealt appropriately with the issue, then you may wish to appeal directly to the head of the local authority human resources or legal department.

- If you feel unable to follow this route, you have the option of contacting any of the prescribed people or bodies recommended in the government publication “Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies”.
- For matters relating to schools these would be:
 - Ofqual
 - Ofsted
 - The Education Secretary/DFE
 - Your Member of Parliament

In taking your concern outside the school, you should ensure that, as far as possible, the matter is raised without confidential information being divulged.

You are protected by law from dismissal, harassment, bullying or other detriment by your employer or other members of staff with whom you work. If this occurs, you have the right to take your case to an employment tribunal.

10. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE HEADTEACHER

If an employee is concerned that the headteacher is the wrongdoer or involved in the wrongdoing and has failed to make a proper investigation or has failed to report the outcome of the investigation, this should be reported to the Chair of Governors. The governors may investigate the allegation themselves in the first instance but are recommended to involve the head of the LA’s human resources or legal department.

11. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The headteacher is responsible for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. It will be reviewed by the governing board at agreed intervals.

This is a true version signed by

Miss N Mehat, Headteacher

Signed:

Date:

Review date: Summer 2028

APPENDIX A - ILLUSTRATIVE LIST OF MALPRACTICE, ABUSE OR WRONGDOING

- Any unlawful act, whether criminal (e.g., theft) or a breach of the civil law (e.g., slander or libel).
- Maladministration (e.g., unjustified delay, incompetence, neglect advice).
- Breach of any statutory Code of Practice
- National Code of Local Government Conduct
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees (e.g., faulty electrical equipment).
- Abuse of children and vulnerable adults (e.g., through physical, sexual, psychological or financial abuse, exploitation or neglect).
- Damage to the environment (e.g., pollution).
- The unauthorised use of public funds (e.g., expenditure for improper purpose).
- Fraud and corruption (e.g., housing benefit fraud, to solicit or receive any gift/reward as a bribe).
- Breach of the Member or Employee Code of Conduct.
- Abuse of power (e.g., bullying/harassment).
- Members of staff who are found to be producing covert recordings, whether audio or visual, on any form of electronic device; whether owned by the school, or a personal device.
- Other unethical conduct.