



WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY

NORTHBOURNE.NSP.001

Approval date: 28th September 2023

Review date: September 2024

Northbourne CE Primary School

Cockcroft Road,
Didcot
OX11 8LJ

Whistle-Blowing Policy

Introduction

1. All schools and academy trusts are required to have appropriate procedures in place for handling whistleblowing and for ensuring school staff know who they can contact if they wish to raise a concern.
2. This document explains the types of concerns that can be raised under this procedure, the legal protection for whistle-blowers and how whistleblowing concerns will be handled.
3. This procedure should be followed for any whistleblowing matters raised by employees of the school, supply staff, agency workers or employees in the central team.

Policy Statement and aims

4. ODST and its member schools are committed to the highest possible standards of openness and inclusiveness, accountability and integrity.

The aims of this procedure are:

- To encourage those working in the school and wider Trust to report suspected wrongdoing promptly, in the knowledge that it will be taken seriously.
- To provide guidance on how to raise concerns.
- To reassure staff that they are able to raise genuine concerns made in the public interest without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

What is whistleblowing?

5. Whistleblowing is when a worker reports certain types of wrongdoing or misconduct within an organisation.
6. The wrongdoing disclosed must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others, e.g. pupils or the general public etc.
7. The wrongdoing must relate to or show one of the following:
 - a criminal offence
 - a failure to comply with a legal obligation
 - a possible miscarriage of justice
 - a Health & Safety risk
 - damaging the environment
 - misuse of public money
 - corruption or unethical conduct
 - abuse of pupils, students or other users
 - deliberate concealment of any of these matters
 - any other substantial and relevant concern.
8. The concern could be about something that happened in the past, is currently happening or likely to happen in the future.
9. Concerns or complaints that employees wish to raise formally, about their own employment, should normally be raised using the ODST Grievance Procedure, unless the employee believes the concern is in the public interest. This includes for example, concerns related to working conditions, working relations, employment rights or bullying or harassment.

Legal protection for whistle-blowers

10. Whistle-blowers are protected by law from being treated unfairly or losing their jobs because they 'blow the whistle'.
11. Whistle-blowers must hold a reasonable belief that the concern they are raising is in the public interest.
12. The Trust will provide all reasonable protection for those who raise concerns made in the public interest.
13. The Trust will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate personal support is offered both to a worker raising a concern and to any worker against whom allegations have been made under this procedure.
14. Although an employee has certain legal obligations of confidentiality to the school/ Trust, in a limited set of circumstances, whistleblowing may override these obligations. This guidance sets out the circumstances under which these disclosures may lawfully be made.

Procedure for reporting a whistle-blowing concern

Step 1: Deciding who to report the concern to

15. Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing.
16. You can raise your concern with your line manager. Alternatively, you can raise the matter with the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors (and for centrally employed staff, the Chair of Trustees).
17. If you wish to report the matter to someone outside of the school/ Trust you can contact one of the external bodies/organisations listed in Annex 2.
18. Reporting concerns to the media, in most cases will lead to the loss of your whistleblowing law rights.
19. Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of your concerns, you will need to demonstrate that you have sufficient evidence or other reasonable grounds to raise them.
20. You may wish to obtain advice from a trade union representative, the Citizen's Advice Bureau or Public Concern at Work on 020 7404 6609 / www.pcaw.co.uk .
21. You can be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague to any meetings that are required.

Step 2

22. The person with whom you have raised your concern, will decide what action is needed. They may ask you to provide further information. They will write to you within 10 days to let you know how your concern will be dealt with.
23. The information you can expect to receive is:
 - an indication of how the concern will be dealt with
 - an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
 - whether any initial enquiries have been made
 - whether further investigations will take place, and if not why not
 - information about support available for you.
24. The person with whom you have raised your concern will at the same time notify the ODST HR team that a whistleblowing allegation has been made.

25. Advice on dealing with concerns is available from the ODST HR team, legal or financial adviser.

Step 3

26. Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate.

27. An investigation may be carried out, depending on the nature of the allegations and the evidence/information presented. Full details of the investigation may be withheld from you to protect the confidentiality of other people.

28. Information will need to be passed on to those with a legitimate need to have this information and it may be necessary for you to provide a written statement and act as a witness in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings or enquiry. This will be discussed with you first.

29. Where an investigation is necessary, it may take the form of one or more of the following:

- an internal investigation by the head teacher or a governor, which may, for example, take the form of a disciplinary investigation
- an investigation by the Internal Audit Service
- a referral to the Police
- the setting up of an external independent inquiry

Step 4

30. You will be informed of the outcome of any investigation, in writing, and/or of any action taken, subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the law.

If you do not feel your concern has been addressed adequately you may raise it with an independent body such as one of the following as appropriate (See Annex 2 for further details):

- your trade union
- the Citizens Advice Bureau
- a relevant professional body or regulatory organisation
- a relevant voluntary organisation
- the Police
- the Local Government Ombudsman
- Equality and Human Rights Commission

31. If there is an issue of an exceptionally serious nature which you believe to be substantially true, then you may disclose the issue to someone other than those listed in paragraph 18. In determining whether it is reasonable for you to have made a disclosure the identity of the person to whom the disclosure is made will be taken into account. Disclosures to anyone outside of the recognised bodies listed in paragraphs 32 and Annex 1 and 2 may not be protected disclosures under the Act.

32. You have a duty to the school/ Trust not to disclose confidential information. This does not prevent you from seeking independent advice at any stage or from discussing the issue with the charity Public Concern at Work on 020 7404 6609 and www.pcaaw.co.uk in accordance with the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Review and reporting of the procedure

33. This procedure will be regularly reviewed by the Board of Trustees of ODST to ensure that it continues to remain compliant and meets the needs of Schools and those working in schools.

Annex: Contacts

Name	Contact Details
Christine Gibbins	odst.whistleblowing@oxford.anglican.org; 01865 208752
Stephen Barber - Trustee	
Ofsted	Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD Tel: 0300 123 3155, whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation	Casework Manager, Ofqual, Spring Place, Coventry Business Park, Herald Avenue, Coventry CV5 6UB Tel: 0300 303 3346, Public.Enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk Online reform form: www.ofqual.gov.uk/complaints-and-appeals/whistleblowing/
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)	The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line is for anyone with child protection concerns in the workplace. The helpline provides support and advice to those who feel unable to get a child protection issue addressed by their employer. It can be contacted anonymously on 0800 028 0285.
Health and Safety Executive	Tel: 0300 003 1647, http://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/raising-your-concern.htm www.hse.gov.uk
The Local Government Ombudsman	Address: PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH, www.lgo.org.uk , 0300 061 0614
Data Protection and Freedom of Information	The Office of the Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, SK9 5AF Tel: 0303 123 1113, casework@ico.gsi.gov.uk