

Whistleblowing Policy



We aim to develop well rounded, confident and responsible individuals who aspire to achieve their full potential. We do this by providing a welcoming, inclusive, safe, and supportive learning environment in which everyone is equal and all achievements are celebrated.

Our Queensbridge
values are:

RESPECT

COLLABORATION

PERSEVERANCE

POSSIBILITIES

RESPECT

We are responsible for our actions
We are empathetic
We are inclusive

COLLABORATION

We are able to ask for and give support
We are articulate
We are a team

PERSEVERANCE

We don't give up
We celebrate our mistakes
We are ambitious

POSSIBILITIES

We are globally aware
We are forward thinking
We are curious

The staff and governors of Queensbridge Primary School seek to run all aspects of school business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity. In the event that members of school staff, parents, governors or the school community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern, Queensbridge Primary School has established the following whistle blowing policy, or code of practice, which acts as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially, and provides for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

Throughout this policy, the term whistle blower denotes the person raising the concern or making the complaint. It is not meant in a pejorative sense and is entirely consistent with the terminology used by Lord Nolan, as recommended in the Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life: Local Spending Bodies, published in May 1996.

Queensbridge Primary School is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. Queensbridge Primary School recognises that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and has therefore developed a system that allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the school environment but also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the school.

Introduction

This policy aims to:

Encourage individuals affected to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and that their confidentiality will be respected

Let all staff in the trust know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the trust

Set clear procedures for how the trust will respond to such concerns

Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistle-blowing concern

Assure staff that they will not be victimised for raising a legitimate concern through the steps set out in the policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken (though vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue)

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the trust in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

Aims

The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is set out in the Academy Trust Handbook.

This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as government guidance on whistle-blowing. We also take into account the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

1.Legislation

The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is set out in the Academy Trust Handbook.

This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as government guidance on whistle-blowing. We also take into account the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

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2.Definition of whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is "in the public interest".

Examples of whistle-blowing include (but are not limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Pupils' or staff health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest
- Damage to the environment

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

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

When staff have a concern they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures.

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) has:

- Further guidance on the difference between a whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure
- A free and confidential advice line

3.Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing concern

Queensbridge Primary School is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness so that a person who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise the matter with full confidence that the matter will be appropriately considered and resolved.

The provisions of this policy apply to matters of suspected fraud and impropriety and not to matters of more general grievance, which would be dealt with under the Queensbridge Primary School grievance procedures.

When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples in **section 2 Definition of whistle-blowing** when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or trust procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

Who to report to

Staff should report their concern to the headteacher . If the concern is about the headteacher , or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the chair of the governors.

How to raise the concern

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

4.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the headteacher referred to from here as the 'recipient' - they will:

Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union or professional association representative

Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting, and record the information. If it becomes apparent the concern is not of a whistle-blowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure

Reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern. If the concern is found to be malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action may be taken (see section 6 of this policy)

Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there is:

The recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the [headteacher and/or chair of trustees - amend to reflect your approach], if appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. In other cases, they may need to report the matter to the police

The person who raised the concern should be informed of how the matter is being investigated and an estimated timeframe for when they will be informed of the next steps

4.2 Outcome of the investigation

Once the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the investigating person(s) will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether or not any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified, and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority or police.

They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.

Beyond the immediate actions, the headteacher, trustees and other staff, if necessary, will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

5. Malicious or vexatious allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an issue. If an allegation is made in good faith, but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the trust will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

6. Escalating concerns beyond the school

The school encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with section 4 of this policy, but recognises that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included here.

The Protect advice line, linked to in section 3 of this policy, can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.

7. Approval

This policy will be reviewed every 4 years.

These procedures have been agreed by the governing body, who will approve them whenever reviewed.

Date: Summer 2024

Review: Summer 2028

Contact details

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8. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

Staff grievance policy

Complaints procedure

Child protection policy