

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Colwall C of E Primary has adopted the whistle-blowing policy used by Herefordshire Council. All teaching staff are employed by the Local Authority and will be supported in the same way as all other council employees.

- 1.1 Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the Council (or school). However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.
- 1.2 Colwall C of E Primary is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees and others that we deal with who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that many cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.
- 1.3 This policy document makes it clear that a member of staff may speak up without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or advantage. *This Confidential Reporting Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within Colwall C of E Primary rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.*
- 1.4 The policy applies to all employees and those contractors working at Colwall C of E Primary. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the Council in their own premises.
- 1.5 These procedures are in addition to Colwall C of E Primary's Complaints policy.
- 1.6 This policy has been discussed with the relevant trade unions and professional organisations and has their support.

## 2 AIMS AND SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

2.1 This policy aims to:

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

2.2 There are existing procedures in place to enable staff to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment.

This policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures.

These include:

- conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
- disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- damages to the environment
- the unauthorised use of public funds
- possible fraud and corruption
- sexual or physical abuse of clients, or
- other unethical conduct.

2.3 Any serious concerns that staff have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of other members of staff or others acting on behalf of the Council can be reported under this Policy.

This may be about something that:

- makes a member of staff feel uncomfortable in terms of the Council's known standards;
- is against the Council's Standing Orders and policies; or
- falls below established standards of practice; or
- amounts to improper conduct.

### 3 SAFEGUARDS

3.1 Colwall C of E Primary recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and those for whom you are providing a service.

3.2 The Council and Colwall C of E Primary will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides additional protection for staff who use this Policy.

3.3 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to protect the identity of the member of staff raising the concern (if they so wish). At the appropriate time, however, they may need to come forward as a witness.

3.4 This policy encourages staff to put their name to their allegation whenever possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful and will be considered at the discretion of the Management and Council.

3.5 If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith, that is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the member of staff. If, however, a member of staff makes an allegation maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against them.

## 4 HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

4.1 As a first step, staff should normally raise concerns with the Head. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. For example, if the member of staff believes that the Head is involved, staff should approach: the chair of Governors.

4.2 Concerns may be raised orally or in writing.

4.3 The earlier a member of staff expresses the concern, the easier it is to take action.

4.4 Although the member of staff raising the concern is not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for their concern.

4.5 Staff should consider discussing their concern with a colleague first as they may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) members of staff who have the same experience or concerns.

4.6 All staff members may invite a trade union representative or a friend to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns they have raised.

## 5 HOW THE MANAGEMENT WILL RESPOND

5.1 The Management will respond to any concerns.

5.2 Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated by management, internal audit, or through the disciplinary process;
- be referred to the Police;
- be referred to the external auditor;
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

5.3 In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle is the public interest. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

5.4 Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

5.5 Within **ten** working days of a concern being raised, the Management will write to the staff member:

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received,
- Indicating how we propose to deal with the matter,
- Giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response,
- Telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made,
- Supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms, and
- Telling you whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not.

5.6 The amount of contact between the officers considering the issues and the staff member raising concerns will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the Management may request further information.

5.7 Where any meeting is arranged, the member of staff can be accompanied by a union or professional association representative or a friend.

5.8 The Management will take steps to minimise any difficulties which the member of staff may experience as a result of raising a concern.

## 6 THE RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

6.1 The SLT has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy.

The Head maintains a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger the member of staff's confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Management.

## 7 HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

7.1 This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within Colwall C of E Primary to raise concerns. The school hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not, and if you feel it is right to take the matter outside the Management, the following are possible contact points:

- Herefordshire Council
- Your Trade Union
- Your local Citizens Advice Bureau
- The Police
- [NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline](#)
- Whistleblowing Advice Line for concerns about children: 0800 0280285 email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)
- [Advice on Whistleblowing](#)

7.1 If you do take the matter outside the Management, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information. Check with the Head about confidential information

Ratified by FGB on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Headteacher

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Chair of Governors

**Next review June 2023**

*'Loving, learning and living life in all its fullness'*