




Bledington Primary School

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Date of Ratification by FGB:	<i>Updated</i> 28.03.2019 21.05.21 03.07.22 17.02.23 01.01.24 09.01.25 14.01.26	Signed: CO-HEADTEACHERS 
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Safeguarding Statement

At Bledington Primary School we respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn, in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by, or invited to deliver services, at Bledington Primary School. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access school and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and bullying.

This policy should be read alongside our Equality, Code of conduct, Health & Safety, Accessibility, Emotional Health & Well-being policies. All our policies are available at:

<https://www.bledington.gloucs.sch.uk/policies/>

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the school. They may not, however, express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the school. They may also fear harassment or victimisation and it may be easier, therefore, to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

The school is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability and expects its employees and others that it deals with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of its work, to come forward and voice those concerns. The term “whistleblowing” in this procedure refers to the disclosure internally or externally by employees of malpractice as well as illegal acts or omissions at work.

This policy makes it clear that employees can report, in a confidential manner, their concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage and is intended to encourage and enable serious concerns to be raised with the school, rather than overlooking the problem or “blowing the whistle” outside.

It is stressed that under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, employees of the school who speak out against corruption or malpractice at work have statutory protection against victimisation and dismissal.

Aims and Scope of Policy

This policy aims to:

- Encourage employees to feel confident in raising serious concerns in those cases where they do not wish to use the normal reporting routes
- Provide alternative avenues for raising concerns
- Ensure that responses to concerns are made
- Reassure employees that they will be protected from possible reprisal or victimisation if they have a reasonable belief that they have raised a concern in good faith

There are existing procedures in place to enable employees to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment; this policy is intended to cover major concerns falling outside the scope of other procedures and include:

- Conduct which is an offence or breach of law
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- Health and safety risks (including risks to the public as well as other employees) where the concerns raised have not been addressed through normal procedures
- Damage to the environment
- The unauthorised use of public funds including fraud and corruption
- Sexual, emotional or physical abuse
- Other unethical or unprofessional conduct
- Notification of any suspicions of price fixing cartels providing goods or services to the school

The school fully understands that employees who are members of a trade union recognised by the school may, in the first instance, wish to seek advice and guidance from their union on the application of this policy.

Any serious concerns which employees have about any aspect of service provision, or the conduct of employees or members of the school or others acting on its behalf can be reported under this policy. This may be about something that:

- Makes an employee feel uncomfortable in terms of apparent non-adherence to known standards
- Appears to be contrary to the requirements of the school's codes of conduct
- Falls below established standards of practice
- May amount to improper conduct
- Appears to be an attempt to mislead

Safeguards

The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be difficult to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from the person who is the subject of the complaint. However, if employees state the truth, they should have nothing to fear because they will be doing their duty to their employer and those for whom they are providing a service.

The school will not tolerate any form of sexual, racial or general harassment or victimisation and will take appropriate action to protect employees when they raise a concern in good faith.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will be separate from any grievance, disciplinary or redundancy procedure that already affects an employee. Equally, any investigation will not be influenced by any such procedures involving an employee.

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made to protect an employee's identity if that is their wish. At the appropriate time, however, they may need to be called as a witness, following a full factual investigation of the concerns raised.

Anonymous Allegations

To ensure that employees receive protection of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 employees must put their name to their allegation. Concerns anonymously expressed are much less powerful and will therefore be investigated at the discretion of the school.

In exercising this discretion, the factors to be considered would include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the concern
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources and factual evidence

Untrue Allegations

If an employee makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If, however, they make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be considered.

Raising a Concern

Employees wishing to raise a serious concern should do so verbally or in writing to the Co-Headteachers. If the allegations concern one or both Co-Headteachers, they should be sent to the Chair of Governors.

Employees wishing to make a written statement are invited to set out:

- The background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates)

- The reason why there is particular concern about the situation

Although employees are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds for their concern.

School's Response

The school will respond to such concerns and, 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 district auditor
- Form the subject of an independent inquiry

To protect individuals, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and what form it might take. The overriding principle which the school will have in mind is the public interest. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (e.g. Safeguarding) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the Co-Headteachers will write to the employee concerned at their private address:

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received
- Indicating how she/ he proposes to deal with the matter
- Telling the employee whether initial enquiries have been made
- Telling the employee whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not

If the matter is subject to further investigation the employee will be kept fully informed of the progress and timescale for the investigation. The amount of contact between those considering the issues and the employee who raised the concern will depend on the nature of the complaint, the potential difficulties involved, and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the school will seek further information from the complainant. A representative of a trade union or a workplace colleague may accompany an employee during any stage of an investigation conducted under this procedure.

The school will take steps to minimise any difficulties which may be experienced as a result of raising a concern.

The school accepts that employees need to be assured that matters of concern have been properly addressed and, therefore, subject to legal constraints, employees will be informed of the outcome of any investigation.

Responsible Officer

The Co-Headteachers have overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy and will ensure that a record of concerns raised, and the outcomes recorded is maintained in a form which does not endanger confidentiality.

Further Action

This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue within the school to raise concerns. The school hopes that employees will be satisfied with any action taken. If they are not, and they feel it is right to take the matter outside school, they should contact the head of legal services at Gloucestershire County Council. If employees decide to take the matter outside the school, they must ensure that they do not disclose to a third party any of the school's confidential information. If in any doubt, they are strongly advised to seek the confidential advice of the head of legal services before taking any action to ensure that they do not inadvertently put themselves in a position where they will be criticised.

Written 19.05.2016
Updated annually