



Shoreham Village School

Whistleblowing Policy

Ratified by Governing Body

Signed:

Chair of Governors

Date: April 2023

To be reviewed: April 2025

Introduction

Shoreham Village School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability and the school encourages employees and others working with the school to raise any concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns. In some instances, concerns may need to be expressed on a confidential basis.

This policy encourages individuals to raise serious concerns, without fear of reprisal or victimisation.

For the purposes of this policy 'individuals' are defined as: all employees, agency workers and those contractors working on the school premises, for example, cleaners, builders and drivers. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the school in their own premises.

Other complaints procedures

This procedure is separate from the school's complaints procedures. The Headteacher is responsible for making service users aware of these procedures. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice under this procedure will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affects an individual.

Aim and scope

This procedure aims to ensure individuals are:

- encouraged to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
- provided with avenues to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- given a response to their concerns and are aware of how to pursue them if not satisfied
- reassured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation if they have a reasonable belief any disclosure has been made in good faith.

There are existing procedures in place to enable individuals to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment including issues relating to harassment and bullying. This procedure is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:

- conduct which is, has been or is likely to be an offence or breach of law
- conduct that has occurred, is occurring or is likely occur as a result of which we fail to comply with a legal obligation. For example unauthorised use of public funds, possible fraud and corruption, sexual or physical abuse of clients, or other unethical conduct discrimination of any kind and waste/frivolous expenditure
- disclosures related to past, current or likely miscarriages of justice
- past, current or likely health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as to children and other employees (see below)
- past, current or likely damage to the environment

Concerns about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of teachers, non teaching staff, voluntary helpers or others acting on behalf of the school can be reported confidentially. This may be about something that the individual:

- feels uncomfortable about in terms of known standards, their experience or the standards they believe the school should subscribe to: or
- are against the school's standing orders and policies; or
- falls below established standards of practice; or
- amounts to improper conduct.

Confidentiality

All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the individual's identity if that is their wish. However, in certain cases, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality if the individual is required to come forward as a witness.

Anonymous allegations

Whenever possible the individual should put their name to the allegation as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful than those that are attributed to a named individual. However, anonymous allegations will be considered and investigated at the school's discretion.

In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

Untrue allegations

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith that is not subsequently confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken. Disciplinary action will only be taken against individuals who knowingly make false, malicious or vexatious allegations.

How to raise a concern

General

Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing. A concern raised in writing should:

- set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible
- the reason why the individual is particularly concerned about the situation.

The earlier a concern is raised the easier it is to take action. Although the individual is expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, sufficient grounds for concern needs to be demonstrated.

A trade union or professional association may raise a matter on behalf of an individual.

Step One - Raising a Concern

Whenever possible the individual should raise the concern with the Head Teacher. If this is not appropriate, the individual should approach the Chair of Governors.

Step Two - How we will respond

The action the school will take will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:

- be investigated internally by the Head Teacher/Leadership Team/Chair of Governors
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the Local Authority
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

In order to protect individuals and the school, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (e.g., child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

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.

Within 10 working days, the responsible person will write to the individual:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how the school proposes to deal with the matter
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- informing the individual if any initial enquiries have been made
- whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not

Contact

The amount of contact between the officers considering the issues and the individual will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought.

Attending meetings

When any meeting is arranged the individual has the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a workplace colleague who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

Support

The school will take steps to minimise any difficulties the individual may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if the individual is required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the school will advise or arrange for the individual to have advice about the procedure.

The school will not tolerate harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take action to protect individuals who raise a concern in good faith.

The school accepts that the individual will need to be assured that concerns will be properly addressed and, subject to legal constraints, will provide information about the outcomes of any investigations.

How the matter can be taken further

This procedure is intended to provide individuals with an avenue to raise concerns within the school. If you are not satisfied, and feel it is right to take the matter further, the following are possible contact points:

- the Local Authority – Kent County Council
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- a solicitor
- the police

If a matter is taken outside the school, the individual must take all reasonable steps to ensure that confidential or privileged information is not disclosed. If in doubt, check with the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors, as appropriate.

Public interest disclosure

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 gives employees two safeguards in respect of disclosures of information.

- An employee is entitled not to be subjected to any detriment by virtue of having made a protected disclosure.
- The dismissal of any KCC employee directly due to the individual having made such a disclosure will automatically be unfair.

Equal Opportunities Statement

We promote equality and the building of a democracy in which all members have rights and responsibilities, and the same opportunity to benefit from, and take part, in the education provided by the school – within and beyond its premises.

Diversity is valued as a rich resource that can contribute to the learning of all pupils and staff.

Disability Statement

Shoreham Village School is proud to be an inclusive school. We offer access to a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils regardless of disability. We strive to ensure all pupils can access, educationally and physically, all learning opportunities within and beyond the school.

Within the confines of an old building, we aim to ensure that all users can access key learning areas, and will ensure that no user experiences any discrimination or reduced entitlement to learning due to being unable to physically access areas of the school.

As with any additional needs the school works closely with parents and appropriate outside agencies to ensure equality of access for all.