

Trusting in God; Growing in Wisdom



Whistle blowing Policy

Date: January 2025

Review Date: January 2026

We are a church school with Jesus at the centre of all that we do. The values of love, joy and peace are at the heart of our learning and teaching. We believe that if we trust in God, and not solely on our own understanding, the children at Whitegate C of E Primary School will have the best possible start to their lives.

With thankful hearts, we trust in God as we grow in his love which shines through us. We aim to live our faith and grow in wisdom.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. (James 3:13)

But the wisdom from above is pure first of all; it is also peaceful, gentle, and friendly; it is full of compassion and produces a harvest of good deeds; it is free from prejudice and hypocrisy. (James 3:17)

INTRODUCTION

This procedure has been developed for the use of Whitegate CofE Primary School employees and other individuals providing services/support to the school (e.g. volunteers). The same principles in terms of protection from harassment and victimisation, confidentiality, support and information on Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) response will apply.

As an employee, Governor, contractor supplier to or consultant with the school, you may from time to time witness practices that seem suspicious. However, you may be deterred from expressing your concerns because you fear harassment or victimisation. You may feel that it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than to report your suspicions. Whitegate CofE 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.

These procedures are intended to encourage and enable you to raise serious concerns within school rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside. Premature or unnecessary publicity may damage the School's reputation, impede proper investigations, or hurt individuals unnecessarily.

A Governor shall not disclose confidential information, without first considering using the procedure in this Whistle Blowing Protocol to raise concerns about an issue, unless it is necessary for the disclosure to be made to the Police or a Regulatory Body.

Examples of concerns that may be raised under the procedure are:

- Law breaking
- Unauthorised use of money
- Miscarriages of justice

- Dishonesty, fraud and corruption
- Health and safety risks (to anyone)
- Sexual, physical or financial abuse
- Damage to the environment
- Other unethical conduct

The governors of Whitegate CofE Primary School want normal operational or managerial channels to be sufficiently open and effective for most concerns to be raised that way. But this will not always be appropriate or possible and that is why we have a Confidential Reporting Procedure. It offers the means to raise concerns you may have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of staff or elected members or other people acting on behalf of the school. A concern may arise, for example, from worries about failure to observe standards or policies being circumvented or improper conduct.

These procedures are intended to supplement, rather than replace, existing School policies and procedures (for example the School's grievance procedures and the policies dealing with dignity at work) whereby employees of the School may already raise complaints or matters of genuine concern with the School. They are therefore designed to provide for those instances where the person reporting the matter feels that, for any reason, they cannot make use of other procedures.

This policy has been designed to take into account Human Rights considerations.

HARASSEMENT OR VICTIMISATION

You may be put off raising a concern because you are worried about reprisals. If you raise a concern in good faith and genuinely believed it to be well founded, you should have nothing to fear. You will be doing your duty to the school and the public. The governors will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including covert pressure) and will do all it can to protect you. If you are involved in other procedures, such as disciplinary or redundancy, these will be kept quite separate from the investigation of your complaint.

You will not be penalised in any way, where you make an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed after it has been investigated. A concern that is raised frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain may result in action being taken against you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your concern will be treated in strict confidence, within this Procedure – and everything done to keep your identity a secret (if this is what you want). But note that you may have to be a witness at some point. It might then not be possible to keep your identity fully secret.

ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible. This is because concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful than those raised by an identified individual. Anonymous allegations will, however, be considered at the discretion of the School.

In exercising this 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 you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, as an employee you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you. In the case of Governors, the Governing Board will consider the matter and may make recommendations to the body who appointed or elected the Governor.

RAISING A CONCERN

Who to approach

There is a list of school governors with whom you can raise concerns. The head teacher can be contacted through the school number (see the last page for contact addresses and phone numbers). When deciding who it would be best to approach, take into account the type of matter, its seriousness and its sensitivity – and who may be involved. Some examples are given:

- Head teacher: Caroline Mackenzie or Safeguarding Governor: Teresa Finney. (for concerns about individual children).
- Head teacher: Caroline Mackenzie or Chair of Governors: Teresa Finney (for concerns about conduct of staff).
- The Chair of Governors: Teresa Finney (for concerns about conduct of the Head teacher).

You can raise your concern orally (i.e. face to face or over the phone) or in writing. If you write, mark the envelope 'personal and confidential'. Whichever way you choose, please give as much information as you can. Remember also to give your name, and for employees your job, where you work and say if you do not want to be contacted at work (if so, give your home address and phone number). If you are not employed by the school, please let us know your relationship with the school (Example: school parent, governor),

The following headings should help you organise your thoughts but you do not have to follow them exactly:

- Why you are concerned and the background information.
- Any other procedures which you have already used – and what happened.
- The people who are involved and where they work.
- Dates or periods of time.
- The names and jobs of any other people who will (or may) support your concern.

The earlier a concern is raised the better. Whilst you will not be expected to prove that allegations are true, you will need to show that you have a reasonable basis for your concern.

You may want to discuss the matter with one or two colleagues first. Their support could be helpful. There is nothing to stop two or more of you putting your names to a concern.

Involvement of your trade union or professional association, or other support such as a friend.

HOW YOUR CONCERN WILL BE DEALT WITH

As a start, discreet enquiries will be made by the Head teacher or governors to decide whether an investigation is needed and if so, how it should be carried out. This will help protect everyone concerned. The overriding principle will be the public interest.

If this first, testing, stage shows that the concern should be followed up, there will either be a special examination of another procedure will be used, if appropriate. Examples of special procedures are the school's Disciplinary Procedure, or the school's child protection procedures. It may be necessary to involve other agencies, for example the police or the school's finance officer. Any urgent action will be taken before the investigation starts. It may be possible of course, to sort out the concern without a detailed investigation.

WHAT YOU WILL BE TOLD

Within 10 working days of your concern being received, the manager who carries out the initial enquiries will write to you confirming:

- What initial enquiries have been made.
- How your concern has been or will be dealt with.
- How long any further action may take (as far as this can be known).
- What further work is planned and how you may be involved.

The amount of contact you have with the people considering the matter will depend on many things. These include the type of concern, the potential difficulties of investigating it and the availability of information. You may need to provide more help. Wherever possible, you will be told the final outcome of an investigation.

A confidential record will be maintained by the Clerk to the Governing Board of all concerns raised.

PERSONAL SUPPORT

Whitegate CofE School will do all it can to minimise any difficulties which you may have because you have mentioned your concern. As far as we can, you will be offered personal support, which the manager leading the investigation will arrange. For example, if you had to give evidence in disciplinary or criminal proceedings, full advice about the procedure would be given to you.

IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE SCHOOL'S REPOSE

This procedure is meant to give everyone an effective way to raise a concern *within* the school (and if possible, to resolve it internally). You should not feel that you have to take an issue outside the school to get satisfaction. But if you are still unhappy after using the procedure (and getting a final response), you are entitled to consider taking your concern elsewhere. If you do this, these are some contacts which are available:

- The Council’s external auditors (see the last page for contact details)
- Your trade union
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- A relevant professional or regulatory body
- A relevant voluntary organisation
- The police

If you raise the matter outside the County Council, you must take into account the rules about disclosing confidential information (for employees, see Section 12 of the Code of Conduct).

MONITORING PROCEDURE

The Council’s Monitoring Officer, working with the County Personnel Officer, will monitor how the procedure works. They will report at least annually to an appropriate Committee of the Council (the Performance and Overview Committee).

Contact Details

Legal Services Helpline	<u>01244 972258</u>
Audit and Risk Management	Whistleblowing2@cheshirewestandchester.go.uk
HR & Personnel Issues	Luke Green 01244 972024
Chief Executive	Delyth Curtis delyth.curtis@cheshirewestandchester.go.uk
Chair of Governors	Teresa Finney t.finney@whitegate.cheshire.sch.uk
Head teacher	Caroline Mackenzie

	01606 212203
Diocese Director of Education	Chris Penn 01244 681973

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PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICY:	<i>CAROLINE MACKENZIE</i>
APPROVED:	<i>FGB</i>
SIGNED:	<i>T FINNEY</i>
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