

Holme Grange School

Whole School Policy including EYFS



Whistleblowing Policy

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Context

The priority for all staff working at Holme Grange is to ensure that the pupils are safe, happy and receiving the best possible education. We work hard to maintain an open and communicative atmosphere, so that staff feel able to raise concerns, feel valued and are encouraged to reflect upon their practice. Provision for mediation and conflict resolution will be provided where necessary. Any concern that an employee may have about illegal or improper conduct by another member of staff or other adult working at the school will be treated with the utmost seriousness.

This document, to be read with reference to the **School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** and the statutory document, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) explains the procedures at Holme Grange should anyone wish to raise a concern, including those which reach the harms threshold or is a low-level concern regarding an adult working or volunteering at the school.

The procedure is designed to enable employees to notify the Headteacher of any reasonable suspicion of wrong-doing: Wrong-doing covered by this 'public interest disclosure' includes:

- someone's health and safety is in danger;
- damage to the environment;
- a criminal offence;
- not obeying the law;
- covering up wrongdoing;
- misusing public funds; (and in schools);
- actions that negatively affect the welfare of children.

This code provides additional information to help staff to understand the role of whistleblowing in the context of poor practice and unacceptable conduct and attitudes towards children.

When to Use the Code

The whistleblowing procedures and this code may be used by anyone employed by the school in a paid or voluntary capacity who believes they have reason to suspect that the conduct of an employee is inappropriate, or when a safeguarding concern has not been pursued as it should have been by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Inappropriate conduct includes, but is not confined to:

- inappropriate behaviour towards a child;
- bullying or humiliation;
- contravening health and safety guidelines;
- serious breaches of the school's code of ethical practice;
- professional practice that falls short of normally accepted standards;
- compromising pupils' welfare.

(Note: specific guidance regarding staff who have a safeguarding concern related to the conduct of a colleague is contained within the School's Safeguarding Policy.)

Reasons for Blowing the Whistle

Staff will naturally be reticent to report a concern about the conduct of a colleague. However, each individual must take responsibility for ensuring that pupils are safe and fairly-treated, and that staff conduct is in keeping with the expectations (as outlined in the Code of Conduct and other associated

documents), aims and objectives of the school. If inappropriate or poor practice is allowed to continue unchecked, it could escalate with serious consequences.

Your action not only protects pupils, but also deters any suggestion that you have colluded with poor practice that you knew was occurring but chose to ignore. Whistleblowing can also support the member of staff who is the subject of the concern. Their conduct may result from inexperience or lack of training that can be addressed by the school, or they may be under stress and be relieved when their conduct is questioned.

Staff whose conduct deliberately falls short of expectations, and/or fails pupils, and who show no remorse or desire to improve, are unlikely to welcome being exposed, but their conduct has to be confronted for the sake of the pupils and the reputation of the whole school.

Barriers to Whistleblowing

You may worry that you have insufficient evidence to raise a concern, that you will set in train an unstoppable chain of events, that there will be adverse repercussions for your career, that you may suffer harassment or victimisation, or that your suspicion or concern might be totally misplaced. These concerns are entirely understandable but you can be reassured that whistleblowing procedures addresses these issues.

In all cases where a disclosure is reasonably considered to be true:

- An employee is entitled not to be subjected to any detriment by virtue of having made a protected disclosure.
- The dismissal of any employee directly due to the individual having made such a disclosure will automatically be deemed unfair.
- Disciplinary action will not be taken against someone who raises a concern “in good faith” reasonably believing the concern to be true.

Raising Your Concern Externally

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects employees from reprisals for public interest whistleblowing. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, concerns should be first raised internally and therefore the procedures outlined in this policy should be followed by raising your concerns with the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors, if the Head is the subject of the concern).

If, you feel you cannot raise your concerns internally the PIDA may afford you protection in relation to your disclosure but only if you are acting in good faith and if you honestly and reasonably believe that your allegations are true. In such circumstances you may consider raising the matter with external regulating agencies, for example ISI or the HSE (see [Further Sources of Information and Support](#), below). If you do take this route to whistle-blow an issue, you may be required to demonstrate why you thought the normal internal procedure was not appropriate. Representations to the media before the above procedures have been used would be considered inappropriate and may be subject to the School’s disciplinary procedures.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All concerns are treated in confidence and, as far as possible, your identity will not be revealed if that is your wish. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if, as a result of an investigation, you are required to provide a witness statement or attend a court hearing.

You can, if you prefer, raise your concern anonymously. The school would need to decide whether the levity and credibility of the concern warrants investigation if the source of the concern, and the key evidence, is not readily available. The school will fully support you and do all it can to protect you from any harassment or adverse repercussions that may arise from whistleblowing.

Allegations that prove to be deliberately fabricated and malicious will be dealt with through staff disciplinary procedures. However, no action will be taken against any member of staff who raises a genuine concern that proves to be unfounded.

Reporting Procedure

It may help if you write down, for your own benefit, what you have observed or heard that is causing alarm. One useful way to decide whether your concern should be reported, is to consider whether you would want the conduct of this member of staff to continue unchecked if your own child or another young family member was involved.

You may raise your concern verbally or in writing. You should report your concern directly to the **Headteacher** head@holmeorange.org .

If the Headteacher is the subject of your concern, speak to the **Chair of Governors** – Mrs Sue Northend snorthend@btinternet.com

Staff should be aware that, if they do not feel that they can raise the issue through the Chair of Governors then the [NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline](#) (where professionals who may have concerns over the handling of child protection concerns in their organisation, can seek advice) is available: tel: **0800 028 0285**. Email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

*Further sources of support and advice are included below**

A friend, colleague or union representative may accompany you to the meeting if you wish. Ensure the head or chair informs you of their proposed action and sets a date for a second meeting. Timescales will depend on the complexity of the initial inquiry but the case should not be allowed to stall and you should receive initial feedback **within 10 working days**. The timescale for subsequent feedback should then be agreed.

Ask for clarification about confidentiality and ensure you have your wishes regarding the protection of your identity recorded.

Process and Outcome

- The Headteacher or chair will make enquiries to establish the facts of the matter and whether poor practice or inappropriate conduct has occurred.
- Members of the school community, including governors, may be asked to provide information or advice.
- External advice, for example, from legal or human resources or children's services may be sought.
- A written record of the conduct, established facts and outcome of the inquiry will be kept.
- The whistleblower will be kept informed of the progress of the inquiry.

The outcome of the inquiry will be one of the following:

- No poor practice or wrongdoing is established and the case is closed

- The concern has some substance and the subject of the concern will receive advice and support from the Headteacher to improve practice
- Poor practice or wrongdoing is established and disciplinary proceedings are initiated
- The concern is more serious and an investigation is initiated. This investigation may involve the local authority's legal team, children's social care or the police.

If, at any stage in the process, there is reason to believe that a child is at risk of significant harm, children's social care will be immediately involved.

Further Action

If you raise a concern and you are dissatisfied with the way it is managed, or the outcome, you may contact the governing body or local authority for advice.

Alternatively you can seek advice from your union or professional association, a solicitor, the police, children's social care or Public Concern at Work (PCaW), a registered charity that offers free and confidential legal advice on workplace malpractice.

Public Concern at Work

Suite 301
 16 Baldwins Gardens
 London
 EC1N 7RJ
 020 7404 6609
 whistle@pcaw.co.uk www.pcaw.co.uk

Further sources of support and Advice:*

LA Designated Officer (LADO) Rene Baron	Wokingham LA Website	LADO@wokingham.gov.uk
NSPCC	0808 028 0285	https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/
Independent Schools Inspectorate	020 7600 0100.	concerns@isi.net
Health and Safety Executive	0300 003 1647	https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/whistleblowers.htm