

SHELTON INFANT SCHOOL

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Introduction

The staff and governors of Shelton Infant School seek to run all aspects of school business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity and where the welfare of the pupils is of paramount importance. In the event that members of school staff, parents, governors or the school community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern, Shelton Infant School has established the following whistleblowing policy, or code of practice, which acts as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially and provides for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

Throughout this policy, the term *whistleblower* denotes the person raising the concern or making the complaint. It is not meant in a pejorative sense and is entirely consistent with the terminology used by Lord Nolan as recommended in the *Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life: Local Spending Bodies* published in May 1996. 'Whistleblowing' has been described as "*providing a safe alternative to silence*" (Public Concern at Work).

Shelton Infant School is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. Shelton Infant School recognises that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and has therefore developed a system which allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the school environment but also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the school.

Shelton Infant 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. The provisions of this policy apply to activities and behaviours listed below and not matters of more general grievance which would be dealt with under the Shelton Infant School grievance procedures.

When might the whistleblowing policy apply?

The type of activity or behaviour which Shelton Infant School considers should be dealt with under this policy includes:-

- deficiencies in the care, or abuse, of children
- inappropriate behaviour
- unethical conduct
- manipulation of accounting records and finances
- inappropriate use of school assets or funds
- decision-making for personal gain
- any criminal activity
- abuse of position
- fraud and deceit
- damage/vandalism to the environment
- serious breaches of school procedures which may advantage a particular party (for example tampering with tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest)

What action should the whistleblower take?

Shelton Infant School encourages the whistleblower to raise the matter internally in the first instance to allow those school staff and governors in positions of responsibility and authority the opportunity to right the wrong and give an explanation for the behaviour or activity.

The whistleblower is invited to raise the matter initially with the Headteacher, or where the Headteacher is the person giving concern, the Chair of Governors.

Headteacher – Anthony Leigh, email head@sheltoni.derby.sch.uk
Chair of Governors – Gill Hall, email chair@sheltoni.derby.sch.uk

The whistleblower may prefer to raise the matter in person, by telephone or in written form marked private and confidential and addressed to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. All matters will be treated in strict confidence and anonymity will be respected wherever possible.

Alternatively if the whistleblower considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the school, the matter may be reported to one of the following organisations:-

- Emily Feenan (Monitoring Officer), Derby City Council. Tel: 01332 643611. Email emily.feenan@derby.gov.uk
- Ofsted, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7LA (Tel: 08456 014772)
- **Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership**, 184 Kedleston Road, Derby, DE22 1GT (Tel 01332 642351)
- **National Audit Office, 157-159 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1 9SP. Phone: 020 7798 7264**

In addition information and advice can be obtained from the charity Public Concern at Work. This charity offers free legal advice in certain circumstances to people concerned about serious malpractice at work. Their literature states that matters are handled in strict confidence and without obligation. Contact details for the charity are as follows:

Public Concern at Work,
The Green House,
244 Cambridge Roadf,
London,
E2 9DA
Website: protect-advice.org.uk
Phone 020 3117 2520

Individuals are recommended to approach their Trade Union/Professional Association for advice and support which may include inviting them to raise the concern on behalf of the whistleblower.

How will the matter be progressed?

The individual(s) in receipt of the information or allegation [the investigating officer(s)] will carry out a preliminary investigation. This will seek to establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation and can be resolved internally. The initial assessment may identify the need to involve third parties to provide further information, advice or assistance, for example involvement of other members of school staff, legal or personnel advisors, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the police. Written records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation.

The whistleblower will be informed of the results of the investigation and the action taken to address the matter (so far as legally possible and subject to rights of confidentiality). Depending on the nature of the concern or allegation and whether or not it has been substantiated, the matter will be reported to the Board of Governors and the Local Authority. If the whistleblower is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter or has genuine concerns that the matter has not been handled appropriately, the concerns should be raised with the investigating officer(s), the Board of Governors and/or directed to the Local Authority.

Respecting confidentiality

Wherever possible Shelton Infant School seeks to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the whistleblower. Should it not be possible to resolve a concern without revealing the identity of the whistleblower (eg the whistleblower's evidence is needed in court or in an internal disciplinary hearing) a discussion will be held with the whistleblower about whether to take the matter forward and, if so how this will be done and how to protect the interests of the whistleblower. Shelton Infant School will not tolerate any attempt to victimise the whistleblower or attempts to prevent concerns being raised and will consider any necessary disciplinary or corrective action appropriate to the circumstances.

Anonymous disclosures

Anonymous disclosures will be considered to the extent that it is reasonable and practicable to do so, although the need to confirm or follow up evidence may make this difficult.

Raising unfounded malicious concerns

Individuals are encouraged to come forward in good faith with genuine concerns with the knowledge they will be taken seriously. If individuals raise malicious, unfounded concerns or attempt to make mischief, this will also be taken seriously and may constitute a disciplinary offence or require some other form of penalty appropriate to the circumstances.

Conclusion

Existing good practice within Shelton Infant School in terms of its systems of internal control both financial and non-financial and the external regulatory environment in which the school operates ensure that cases of suspected fraud or impropriety rarely occur. This whistleblowing policy is provided as a reference document to establish a framework within which issues can be raised confidentially internally and if necessary outside the management structure of the school. This document is a public commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Safeguarding Policy.