

Watergate School



Whistle-blowing Policy

This policy was agreed by the Headteacher on: (and supersedes all previous policies relating to this area)	
Signed by: <i>I. G. Deben</i> Headteacher	
Implemented: Autumn 2016	
Interim Review and update : Spring 2019 Carolyn Vagg Reviewed November 2019	
Review date: Autumn 2019	

Watergate School

Whistle Blowing Policy

This guidance is written for all staff, whether paid or voluntary, working at Watergate School. It is intended to support and strengthen the London Borough of Lewisham's Whistle Blowing Policy and to show the School's own commitment to that Policy. The School's Policy extends to all aspects of school life, including the safeguarding of children.

In broad terms staff are protected by law if they 'blow the whistle' in relation to the following :

- a criminal offence, for example fraud
- someone's health and safety is in danger
- risk or actual damage to the environment
- a miscarriage of justice
- the company is breaking the law
- someone appears to be covering up wrongdoing

Complaints that do not count as whistleblowing (and are not covered by whistleblowing law) are personal grievances (for example bullying, harassment, discrimination) unless this particular case is in the public interest. These should be reported under our grievance policy.

Staff must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of line managers, senior management and/or relevant external agencies. Although this can be difficult, this is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

A member of staff may be the first to recognise that something is wrong with the particular way a matter is dealt with but may not feel able to voice concerns out of a feeling that this would be disloyal to colleagues or because of the fear of victimisation or harassment. These feelings may be natural but must never result in perceived malpractice continuing, particularly where a child or young person would be put at unnecessary risk. It is often the most vulnerable children or young people who are targeted. We recognise that such children need adults like us to safeguard their welfare.

No matter what aspect of school life is involved:

Don't think 'What if I'm wrong?' – think 'What if I'm right?'

Why blow the whistle?

- The children at Watergate School are exceptionally vulnerable and the majority do not have the ability to communicate if they are not being treated safely, kindly and with respect.

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening.
- To protect or reduce risks to others.
- To stop the possibility of becoming implicated yourself.

What stops people from whistle blowing?

- Starting a chain of events which spirals.
- Disrupting the work or project.
- Fear of getting it wrong.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers.
- Fear of not being believed.

How to raise a concern

- Individuals or groups must voice their concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as they feel they can. The earlier a concern is expressed, the easier and sooner action can be taken.
- Pinpoint, if possible, exactly what it is that is causing concern and why.
- If your concern is about the safety and well-being of a child you may log your concern on CPOMS, the school's online safeguarding system
- Approach the Headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team or a Designated Child Protection Officer
- If the concern is about the Headteacher it needs to be taken to someone outside the school, the staff member must contact the Chair of Governors or the Lewisham Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- Ideally, concerns should be put in writing, outlining the background and history, giving details of the concern, names, dates and places
- An employee can request anonymity but we may not be able to take the claim further if all the information we need has not been provided.
- An employee must give their name but can request confidentiality – we will make every effort to respect this where possible but not if to do so will compromise the case.
- Whistle-blowers must make sure they receive a satisfactory response– don't let matters rest.
- A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.
- If concerns are reported to the media it is likely that whistleblowing rights in law will be lost

What happens next?

- As an employer (or another prescribed person or body) we employer we will listen to your concern and decide if any action is needed. You may be asked for further information
- You must say straight away if you do not want anyone else to know it was you who raised the concern.
- You will not have a say in how your concern is dealt with.

- Your employer or the prescribed person can keep you informed about the action they've taken, but they cannot give you much detail if they have to keep the confidence of other people.
- We have a responsibility to protect staff from harassment or victimisation.
- No action will be taken against any whistle-blower if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence.

If you believe you have been treated unfairly after whistleblowing

- Raise it with the Headteacher or the school's Chair of Governors
- A whistleblower can take their case to an [employment tribunal](#) if they believe they have been treated unfairly because they've blown the whistle.
- Acas must be notified if a staff member wants to take their case to an employment tribunal.
- Any claim of unfair dismissal must be raised within 3 months of employment ending.
- Further advice and information is available from the [Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service \(Acas\)](#), [Citizens' Advice](#), the whistleblowing charity [Public Concern at Work](#) or your trade union.

Self-reporting

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be affecting their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their line manager so that professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned. Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most instances, this cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

Further advice and support

It is recognised that whistle blowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from your line manager, the Local Authority's HR department and/or a professional or trade union. Additionally, the NSPCC's Whistleblowing helpline can be reached on 0800 028 0285.

This Policy was first adopted by the Governors of Watergate School on 12th May 2015 and is to be reviewed every three years thereafter.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Watergate School Staff Code of Conduct
- Watergate School Child Protection & safeguarding Policy
- Watergate School Management of Allegations Against Staff Policy

Updated 11/11/2019