



WADEBRIDGE SCHOOL

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

APPROVED BY TRUSTEES: FEBRUARY 2019, REVISED OCTOBER 2019 & DECEMBER 2019, APPROVED MARCH 2024.

Introduction

Trustees of Wadebridge School are committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns.

This procedure makes it clear that you can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. It is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious problems within the school rather than overlooking a problem or "blowing the whistle" outside.

This procedure is based on the 2010 Cornwall Council model policy which had been discussed with the relevant trade unions and professional organisations and has their support. The original policy has been updated with minor changes in order to reflect our Academy status.

Trustees have appointed Monitoring Trustees with specific responsibility for this procedure. The responsible Trustees are **Mr Chris Sims, and Mr Matt Williams** contact at: csims@wadebridge.cornwall.sch.uk or mwilliams@wadebridge.cornwall.sch.uk. In addition, the head teacher can be contacted at head@wadebridge.cornwall.sch.uk

Aims and Scope of this Procedure

This procedure aims to:

- encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
- provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied
- reassure you that you will be protected from possible victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure in good faith.

The procedure is intended to supplement, rather than to replace, the existing complaints, disciplinary and grievance procedures held by Wadebridge School. It is intended to cover serious concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures and may relate to something which:

- is against Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and/or DfE legislation and agreements
- is against Wadebridge School's policies and procedures or
- falls below established standards of practice, or
- amounts to improper conduct, including something you believe may be:
 - against the law
 - a Health and Safety risk
 - damaging to the environment
 - misuse of public money

- corruption or unethical conduct
- abuse of clients or service users

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made to protect your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to provide a statement or act as a witness and will be expected to co-operate fully with the investigation and disclose all relevant information.

Anonymous Allegations

This procedure encourages you to put your name to your concern as anonymous allegations may often be difficult to substantiate/prove.

Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be investigated unless the School's Monitoring Trustee in consultation with the Chair of Trustees agrees there is insufficient evidence to proceed.

Untrue Allegations

If you raise a concern in good faith, but it is not subsequently confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

How to Raise a Concern

As a first step you should normally raise concerns with the head teacher. However, the Trustees recognise that on occasion this may not be appropriate and you should raise the concern with the nominated Trustees above.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing, however a written statement may be requested during the investigation process.

Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of your concerns, you will need to demonstrate that you have reasonable grounds to raise them.

Where employees fail to report their concerns they may become themselves implicated and consequently the Trustees may treat failure by an employee to report such matters as a serious matter which could lead to disciplinary action.

You may wish to obtain assistance in putting forward your concern from a Trade Union representative or a colleague. You may choose to be represented by a Trade Union representative or colleague at any meetings which are required.

How Trustees will respond

In order to protect individuals and the Trustees, 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 (for example Child Protection issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Either you will raise your concern with the Monitoring Trustee, or the person with whom you have raised your concern will inform that Trustee of the facts. The Trustee will write to you, within ten working days with the following information:

- acknowledgement that the concern has been received
- an indication of how the concern will be dealt with
- an estimate of how long it will take to provide a full response
- whether any initial enquiries have been made
- whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.

The Trustees will inform you in writing of the outcome of any investigation, or any action taken, subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the law.

The Responsible Officer

The School's Monitoring (Whistleblowing) Trustees have overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy within the school. Those Trustees will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcomes and will report as necessary to the Governing body. The recording and reporting procedure will be in a form which ensures your confidentiality.

How the Matter can be Taken Further

This procedure is intended to provide you with a route within the School to raise concerns. However, if you do not feel that your concern has been addressed adequately, you may raise it with an independent body such as one of the following:

- your Trade Union
- your local Citizens Advice Bureau
- a relevant professional body or regulatory organisation
- the Education & Skills Funding Agency or DfE
- a relevant voluntary organisation
- the police

You have a duty to the School not to disclose confidential information. This does not prevent you from raising concerns with an independent body referred to above, or Public Concern at Work (see contact information below)

Legislation and Contacts

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) is designed to protect employees who report wrongdoing in their organisation provided that they have an honest and reasonable suspicion that the allegation is true. PIDA has its origins in the European Convention on Human Rights which was incorporated into UK law by the Human Rights Act 1998. The PIDA came into force on 2nd July 1999 and offers a framework of protection against victimisation or dismissal for workers who blow the whistle on criminal behaviour or wrongdoing.

The Bribery Act 2010 defines bribery as giving or receiving a financial or other advantage in connection with the improper performance of a position of trust or a function that is expected to be performed impartially and in good faith. Fraud is committed when a person dishonestly makes a false representation to make a gain for oneself or another or dishonestly fails to disclose to another person, information which one is under a legal duty to disclose, or commits fraud by abuse of position (Fraud Act 2006).

Public Concern at Work is an independent charity which provides free, confidential advice on whistleblowing. The website address with contact information is www.pcaw.co.uk.

External Auditors- Wadebridge School's auditors are Griffin Chartered Accountants, Courtenay House, Pynes Hill, Exeter, EX2 5AZ