

Whistleblowing Policy

Purpose

Alder Bridge School aims to promote an environment of mutual trust, respect and open communication and to create a workplace that is free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and dishonesty. To support this approach the school encourages all staff (employed and voluntary), Trustees, parents and carers to be aware of the importance of raising concerns to prevent and eliminate wrong-doing. The school is committed to ensuring that anyone wishing to raise concerns should feel confident and able to do so. This policy and procedure sets out how such concerns should be raised and handled within the school.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff (paid and voluntary), Trustees, parents and carers.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act enables individuals to raise concerns where they have a reasonable belief that:

- A criminal offence;
- A miscarriage of justice;
- An act creating a risk to health and safety; this includes safeguarding concerns
- A breach of other legal obligation;
- Damage to the environment;
- Concealment of any of the above;

is being, has been or is likely to be committed, and it is in the public interest to disclose it, without fear of dismissal, victimisation or detriment.

Definitions

The school will ensure that concerns are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially, and that appropriate remedial action is taken.

The school will protect workers who raise concerns, based on a reasonable belief, under this procedure from dismissal, victimisation or detriment because they have made a disclosure.

Specific Instructions

How to raise a concern

Concerns should be raised early to enable appropriate remedial action to be carried out and should be reported to the relevant person in the school:

- to the Designated Safeguarding Lead if a possible Child Protection issue (details from Policy on School's website or the School Office)
- to the Education Manager
- to the School Business Manager
- to the Chair of Trustees
- to the Chair of the College of Teachers

Concerns should be raised in writing, or if made verbally then confirmed in writing. Those raising concerns are encouraged to put their name to their allegation, as anonymous allegations are harder to investigate. Where someone asks to remain anonymous, the school will respect his/her request, but cannot guarantee that it will be able to do so.

It is helpful if the concern contains the background history of the concern (giving relevant names and dates) and the reason for the specific concern about the situation.

Handling concerns

The person receiving the concern will hold an initial meeting with the person who made the concern as soon as possible to acknowledge the concern has been raised and clarify the details. If the matter can be resolved simply, for example where there has been a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of an event,

and the person who raised the concern is satisfied then the matter is declared resolved and a record kept of the decision (separate file kept confidential if not recorded in a personnel file).

Where the matter needs to be taken further, advice should be sought from another professional, for instance: the Chair of Trustees; the West Berks Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for Safeguarding

No-one implicated in the allegations will be involved in conducting the investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before an investigation is conducted.

Within ten working days of the concern being raised, the recipient of the concern will contact the person who raised the concern to:

- Indicate how it is proposed to deal with the matter
- Give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Tell the worker whether any initial enquiries have been made
- Provide information on staff support mechanisms
- Inform the worker whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not

Concerns that fall within the scope of school procedures (e.g. child protection, complaints and grievances for example) will normally be considered under those procedures.

Safeguards against dismissal, victimisation or detriment

Anyone who makes a protected disclosure has the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment, or victimised because he/she has made a disclosure. The school will keep the matter confidential as far as possible. Where an investigation confirms the allegations the person who raised the concern may be required to attend hearings as witnesses.

Anyone (including managers, trustees and co-workers) found to subject anyone who has made a protected disclosure to inappropriate action under a formal procedure, bullying, harassment, victimisation or detriment may be subject to disciplinary or other appropriate action.

Malicious allegations

It is not necessary for someone to have proof that wrongdoing is being, has been, or is likely to be committed; a reasonable belief is sufficient. Information given should be true to the best of the person's knowledge, information and belief. Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence and will be handled under the school's disciplinary procedure.

Taking the matter further

Where the worker is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken he/she should contact the Chair of Trustees and beyond that outside agencies including OFSTED, the Local Authority.

Responsibilities

The overall responsibility for this policy and procedure within the schools rests with the Trustees. All members of staff have an individual responsibility to adhere to this policy and procedure. The Safeguarding Trustee is responsible for reporting any whistleblowing safeguarding concerns to the Trustee Group.

Approved By: Trustees

Next Review date: March 2018