



**Eden  
Primary**

# Whistleblowing Policy

Approved by: Finance & Staff Committee

January 2019

## EDEN PRIMARY

### WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

#### INTRODUCTION

The Governors and staff of Eden Primary seek to carry out all aspects of school business and activity with full regard to high standards of conduct and integrity. In the event that governors, school staff, parents or the school community at large become aware of activities, which give cause for concern, we have established the following “Whistleblowing Policy”. This acts as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially, and provides for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter, in order 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. Eden Primary is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. We recognise that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and have therefore developed a system which allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the school environment and also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the School.

We are 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 it will be appropriately considered and resolved.

The provisions of this policy apply to matters of suspected fraud and impropriety, and not matters of a more general grievance, which would be dealt with through the School Complaints Policy.

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, instigating and remedying any wrong doing in the work place. Staff are encouraged to report any concerns to the Headteacher.

## **WHEN MIGHT THE WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY APPLY?**

The type of activity or behaviour which we consider should be dealt with under this policy includes:

- 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
- serious breaches of School procedures which may advantage a particular party (e.g. tampering and tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest)
- danger of Health and Safety
- failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters

## **WHAT ACTION SHOULD THE WHISTLEBLOWER TAKE?**

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

We have designated two individuals to specifically deal with such matters and the whistleblower is invited to decide which of those individuals would be the most appropriate person to deal with the matter:

Chair of Governors

Head Teacher

The whistleblower may prefer to raise the matter in person, by telephone, or in written form marked 'private and confidential' and addressed to one of the above named individuals. All matters will be treated in strict confidence and anonymity will be respected whenever possible.

## **HOW WILL THE MATTER PROGRESS?**

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.

Records will be kept of actions taken throughout the investigation. The investigating officer(s), possibly in conjunction with the Governing Body, will consider how best to report the findings and what corrective action needs to be taken. This may include some form of disciplinary action or third party referral, such as the Police.

The whistleblower will be informed of the results of the investigation and the action taken to address the matter. Depending on the nature of the concern or allegation and whether or not it has been substantiated, the matter will be reported to the Governing Body. 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) and/or the Governing Body.

### **RESPECTING CONFIDENTIALITY**

Wherever possible, Eden Primary seeks to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the whistleblower and will, as far as possible, protect him/her from reprisals. We 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.

### **RAISING UNFOUNDED MALICIOUS CONCERNS**

Individuals are encouraged to come forward in good faith with genuine concerns, with the knowledge that 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.

### **CONCERNS AGAINST GOVERNORS**

If a concern against a Governor is received, then this will be treated in the same way as any other concern and will receive the same consideration. The concern should be raised by the Headteacher with the designated Governor and discuss the relevant course of action.

In circumstances where the concern is against the designated Governor then the Headteacher will decide with another Governor how the matter should be dealt with.

## **INVESTIGATION AND OUTCOME**

Once a member of staff has raised a concern the school will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. The school will inform the 'whistleblower' of the outcome of its assessment. The member of staff raising the concern may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

The school will aim to keep the member of staff informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent the school from giving specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. The member of staff is required to treat any information about the investigation as strictly confidential.

If the school concludes that the 'whistleblower' has made false allegations maliciously, in bad faith or with a view to personal gain, the 'whistleblower' will be subject to disciplinary action.

There are no rights to appeal against any decisions taken under this procedure, However, an employee or Headteacher will have the right to refer any particular case to the designated Governor for review.

## **PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR 'WHISTLEBLOWER'S'**

It is understandable that 'whistleblower's' are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. Eden Primary aims to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern in good faith. If a member of staff believes that they have suffered any such treatment, they must inform the Headteacher immediately.

Staff must not threaten or retaliate against the 'whistleblower' in any way. Anybody involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

## **CONCLUSION**

Existing good practice at Eden Primary in terms of its systems, and of internal control both financial and non-financial, and the external regulatory environment in which the School operates, ensures that, as far as possible, cases of suspected fraud or impropriety do not 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.

If staff are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy, they should seek the advice of the Headteacher and if the matter is in relation to an alleged wrongdoing by the Headteacher or to the Headteacher then staff should seek advice from the designated Governor.