

GROVE ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Whistleblowing Policy
September 2024



"Our family school where all are equally valued"

Contacts

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1. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Grove Road school.

The policy is intended to apply not only to employees but also to contractors working for the school on school premises. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the school.

The recognised trade unions have been consulted.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to encourage employees and others to feel confident in raising serious concerns by providing clear avenues through which those concerns can be raised and reassuring those who raise concerns that they will not be victimised if they have a reasonable belief and the disclosure was made in good faith.

The policy will ensure that staff and others who raise concerns receive a response and are informed about how their concerns are being dealt with.

3. Policy

All employees at one time or another have concerns about what is happening at work. Usually these concerns are easily resolved. However, when they are about unlawful conduct, sexual or physical abuse of pupils, financial malpractice, health and safety risks to the public or to other employees, damage to the environment, possible fraud or corruption or any other unethical conduct, it can be difficult to know what to do.

Employees may be worried about raising such issues or may want to keep the concerns to themselves, perhaps feeling it is none of their business or that it is only a suspicion. They may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to the school. They may decide to say something but find that they have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next. They may also fear harassment or victimisation.

The school is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. It expects that its employees who have serious concerns about anything that is happening in the school to come forward and raise those concerns. The school, however, recognises that employees need to be supported and have confidence that any concerns will be treated appropriately. The purpose of this policy is to enable employees to raise concerns about at an early stage and in the right way. The school would rather that matters were raised when it is just a concern rather than wait for proof.

This policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the school itself are at risk. If employees have a concern about their employment with the school this should be raised through the school's Grievance Procedure. The school also has policies to cover the situation where you personally are the victim of bullying or harassment.

The message for employees is 'If in doubt - raise it!'

4. Safeguards for those who raise a concern

The school is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees. The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If you raise a genuine concern under this policy you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to the school.

The school will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence, or be influenced by, any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that may already affect you.

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however you may need to come forward as a witness.

You should, whenever possible put your name to your allegation, as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful. The school will exercise discretion in considering anonymous allegations if the issue raised is sufficiently serious - e.g. involving child protection issues, individual or public safety, corruption, waste or other impropriety - and credible and there is a likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not 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.

5. How to raise a concern

It is normally expected that concerns will be raised in the first instance with your immediate line manager, Headteacher or Chair of the Governing Body.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. If you wish to make a written report it is suggested that you include the background and history of the concern with relevant dates and the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

You will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

Your trade union representative, a colleague or a friend may accompany you at any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised.

6. How the school will respond

Once you have raised your concern, it will be looked into to assess initially what action should be taken.

As appropriate, matters raised may:

- be investigated by the school through the disciplinary process
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the local authority
- form the subject of an independent investigation

In deciding how to deal with the concern raised, the overriding principle which the school will have in mind is the public interest, pupils and staff. Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures e.g. child protection will be dealt with in accordance with the school's child protection procedures. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the person with whom you have raised the concern will write to you acknowledging that the concern has been received and indicating how the school proposes to deal with the matter. If there is an ongoing investigation the person responsible for that investigation will provide you with updates on how the matter is progressing and inform you of the outcome of the investigation, subject to any legal constraints.

The school will take steps to minimise any difficulties, which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the school will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure and any support and counselling you may require.

7. The responsible officer

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. The Headteacher will maintain a record of concerns raised, and the outcomes, in a form that does not endanger your confidentiality, and will report as necessary to the Governing Body and/or local authority.

8. External contacts

While the school hopes this policy gives you the reassurance you need to raise such matters internally, it recognises that there may be circumstances where you may feel unable to do so, because the matter is of an extremely sensitive or serious nature, or you believe management to be involved, you can properly report matters to outside bodies, such as the local authority or the police.

Your union or Citizens Advice Bureau will be able to advise you on such an option and on the circumstances in which you may be able to contact an outside body safely. Below are some alternative external contacts:

At the local authority:

- Designated Officer – 020 8583 5730 or lado@hounslow.gov.uk

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