

Dr Walker's C of E Primary School



An Exceptional Place to Flourish

Though your beginning was small,
your future will flourish indeed.
Job 8:7

STATUTORY POLICY

Whistleblowing Policy

Shared with staff	2023
Ratified by Governors	06.11.23
Review Cycle	Annually

Chair of Governors: Mrs K Bush	
Headteacher: Dr L Lawson	

Contents

Pre-ample: School Vision, Ethos and Values	3
Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	3
Aims	4
What is whistleblowing?.....	4
Raising a whistleblowing concern	4
Confidentiality	5
Concerns about Governors.....	5
External disclosures	5
Investigation and outcome.....	6
Protection and support for ‘whistleblower’s	6
Safeguarding	7
How to raise a concern:.....	7
What happens next?.....	7
Self-reporting.....	7
Further advice and support	7
NSPCC Whistleblowing advice line	7
Appendix – Allegations against staff and Whistleblowing	9
Appendix - Contact details.....	10

Pre-amble: School Vision, Ethos and Values

Dr Walker's is a mixed Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School in Fyfield, Ongar, Essex.

We support all pupils to succeed in reaching their God given potential at Dr Walker's – 'An Exceptional Place to Flourish', by developing

- **Belief** in self and the development of confidence, respect and trust for others and an appreciation of spirituality and an understanding of faith in God;
- **Engagement** in a love for learning by nurturing curiosity and independence; and
- **Excellence** in reaching personal goals by demonstrating resilience and positive behaviour.

Our **CHRISTIAN VALUES** are reflected in:

- Standing with **COURAGE** for what is right.
- Using **CREATIVITY** in problem solving and making life beautiful.
- Treating every person and everything with **RESPECT**.
- Having **COMPASSION** for others.
- Completing every task with **PERSEVERANCE**.
- Taking **RESPONSIBILITY** for ourselves.
- Living with **HOPE** for a better future.

At Dr Walker's we provide every pupil with the care and support they need to develop as individuals and become educated and successful British Citizens who understand the importance of the following British values:

- **Democracy**
- **The rule of law**
- **Individual liberty**
- **Mutual respect and**
- **Tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.**

Acknowledgements

This Policy was adopted from the model *Whistleblowing and Procedures Policy*.

Introduction

Dr Walker's C of E Primary School is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and expects all staff to maintain high standards in accordance with their contractual obligations and the School's policies and procedures.

However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

This procedure is not a substitute for normal line management processes but an addition to them. Staff should always first consider using normal line management for raising concerns. This procedure is only for the purpose of raising concerns about wrongdoing and is not a substitute or alternative for existing procedures such as the Grievance, Disciplinary Procedures for staff or the complaints procedure.

This procedure should only be used where all other existing internal procedures are felt to be inappropriate or when a member of staff, for whatever reason, feels inhibited in going through the normal line management. As an example, therefore, if a member of staff has a personal grievance, then it must be raised through the grievance procedure; it would not be appropriate for it to be raised through this procedure. The existence of this procedure does not prevent staff from raising concerns through their trade union if they so wish. The procedure is therefore not a route through which employees can raise concerns about mismanagement which may arise from weak management rather than malpractice.

This policy takes account of the Whistleblowing Arrangements Code of Practice issued by the British Standards Institute and Public Concern at Work.

This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and is not intended to have contractual effect. It is provided for guidance to all members of staff at the School and the School reserves the right to amend its content at any time.

This Policy reflects the school's current practices and applies to all individuals working at all levels of the organisation, including the Governors, Headteacher, members of the Senior Leadership Team, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff (collectively referred to as "staff" in this policy) who are advised to familiarise themselves with its content.

Aims

- To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected.
- To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns.
- To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be a mistake.

What is whistleblowing?

- Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:
 - criminal activity;
 - child protection and/or safeguarding concerns;
 - miscarriages of justice;
 - danger to health and safety;
 - damage to the environment;
 - failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
 - financial fraud or mismanagement;
 - negligence;
 - breach of the school's internal policies and procedures including its Code of Conduct;
 - conduct likely to damage the School's reputation;
 - unauthorised disclosure of confidential information; and
 - the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.
- A 'whistleblower' is a person who raises a genuine concern in good faith relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the school's activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.
- This policy should not be used for complaints relating to staff's own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In these cases, the Grievance Policy and Procedure will be followed.

Raising a whistleblowing concern

- Dr Walker's C of E Primary School hopes that in many cases Staff will be able to raise any concerns with their Line Manager, speaking to them in person or putting the matter in writing if they prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving a concern quickly and effectively. In some cases they may refer the matter to the Governing Body.
- However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that your Line Manager has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact one of the following:
 - **The Headteacher**
 - **The Governor with responsibility for Whistleblowing matters**

- The Headteacher will arrange a meeting with the ‘whistleblower’ as soon as practicable to discuss their concern. They will record sufficient details to enable the matter to be thoroughly investigated. As a minimum the Headteacher will record the name of the employee but also indicate whether the individual wishes his or her identity to remain confidential, if possible and the nature of the concern. In some cases, it will not be possible to maintain confidentiality and the Headteacher should explain this to the employee. In such instances the employee will have the choice of either withdrawing or agreeing to his/her identity becoming known to enable the concern to be effectively dealt with.
- Staff may bring a colleague or trade union representative to any meetings under this policy who must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.
- Dr Walker’s C of E Primary School will take notes and produce a written summary of the concern raised and provide the ‘whistleblower’ with a copy as soon as practicable after the meeting. Dr Walker’s C of E Primary School will also aim to give the “whistleblower” an indication of how it proposes to deal with the matter.

Confidentiality

- Dr Walker’s C of E Primary School hopes that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if a member of staff wants to raise his or her concern confidentially, the school will endeavour to keep his or her identity secret in so far as it is possible to do so when following this policy and procedure.
- If it is necessary for anyone investigating that member of staff’s concern to know the ‘whistleblower’s identity, the school will discuss this with the member of staff first.
- The school does not encourage Staff to make disclosures anonymously.
- Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if the school cannot obtain further information.
- It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible and have been made in good faith.
- ‘Whistleblower’s who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to one of the contacts listed above and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality.
- If an individual misuses the policy and procedure e.g. by making malicious or repeated unsubstantiated complaints against colleagues this could give rise to action under the School’s Disciplinary Procedure.
- If the Headteacher knows or has a suspicion that an employee comes into this category then s/he will take advice from the Designated Governor who will help to determine what action should be taken.

If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are:

Public Concern at Work (Independent whistle blowing charity)

Helpline: 020 7404 6609 E-mail: whistle@pcaw.co.uk Website: www.pcaw.co.uk

Concerns about Governors

- If a concern about a Governor is received, then this will be treated in the same way as any other concern. It will receive the same serious consideration. The concern will be raised by the Headteacher with the Chair of Governors who will decide how it should be dealt with.
- If the concern is against the Chair of Governors, then clearly this process cannot be followed. In such circumstances, the concern will be taken directly to the Headteacher who will decide in consultation with the Headteacher and the Governor with responsibility for Whistleblowing matters, how it should be dealt with. In normal circumstances such a concern would be referred to the Department for Education for action.

External disclosures

- The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases staff should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

- The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for Staff to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern.
- Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of School Staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a service provider. The law allows Staff to raise a concern in good faith with a third party, where the member of staff reasonably believes it relates mainly to their actions or something that is legally their responsibility. However, Staff are encouraged to report such concerns internally first. Staff should contact one of the other individuals set out above for guidance.

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 to provide further information.
- In most cases a panel of three Governors will investigate any issue. In rare cases the school may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including Staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable the school to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.
- 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 a 'whistleblower' has made false allegations maliciously, in bad faith or with a view to personal gain, the 'whistleblower' will be subject to disciplinary action under the School's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- Whilst the school cannot always guarantee the outcome a particular member of staff is seeking, the school will try to deal with the concern fairly and in an appropriate way. If a member of staff is not happy with the way in which his or her concern has been handled, he or she can raise it with the designated governor or one of the other key contacts outlined above.
- Any member of staff raising a concern under the procedure will be kept informed of progress by the Headteacher, including, where appropriate, the final outcome. However, in certain circumstances, e.g. where disciplinary action under the School's Disciplinary Procedure has resulted from the concern, it may not be appropriate to provide specific details due to the confidentiality and sensitivity of such matters.

Protection and support for 'whistleblower's

- It is understandable that 'whistleblower's are sometimes worried about possible repercussions.
- The school 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 because of raising a concern in good faith. Detrimental treatment would include dismissal, disciplinary action, threats, or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern.
- If a member of staff believes that he or she has suffered any such treatment, he or she should inform the Headteacher immediately.
- If the matter is not remedied the member of staff should raise it formally using the School's Grievance Policy and Procedure.
- Staff must not threaten or retaliate against 'whistleblower's in any way.
- Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.
- All Staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing.
- Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved.
- Comments, suggestions, and queries should be addressed to the Headteacher in the first instance.

Safeguarding

- If a member of staff suspects that there is a serious safeguarding issue that they feel that the Headteacher is not taking seriously or that they believe there is a serious safeguarding issue involving the Headteacher they should in the first instance, contact the Designated Governor.

How to raise a concern:

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions, or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can.
- The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken.
- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why.
- A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.
- You should put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates, and places wherever you can.
- Approach your immediate manager, Headteacher, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- If your concern is about your immediate manager/Headteacher, or you feel you need to take it to someone outside the school contact The Local Authority
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response – do not let matters rest.

What happens next?

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- The employer has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation.
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.
- Allegations made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain will be seen in a different light and disciplinary action may be taken.

Self-reporting

- There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, or perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence.
- Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their line manager so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned.
- Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most situations, 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, HR department and/or your professional trade union.

NSPCC Whistleblowing advice line

When to call:

If you have any concerns about a child in your workplace you should raise this with your employer or organisational safeguarding lead in the first instance.

- You should call the Whistleblowing Advice Line if:
 - your organisation doesn't have clear safeguarding procedures to follow;
 - you think your concern won't be dealt with properly or may be covered-up;
 - you've raised a concern but it hasn't been acted upon; and
 - you're worried about being treated unfairly.
- You can call about an incident that happened in the past, is happening now or you believe may happen in the future.

What to expect when you call:

One of the call handlers will connect you with a trained practitioner. They will discuss your concerns with you and:

- talk you through the whistleblowing process;
 - take details of your concern;
 - explain the protection available to you if you need it; and
 - get relevant agencies and authorities to take action on your concern.
-
- You don't have to tell the NSPCC who you are if you don't want to - you can remain anonymous. If you do give your name and contact details you can ask them not to share these with other agencies.

The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line

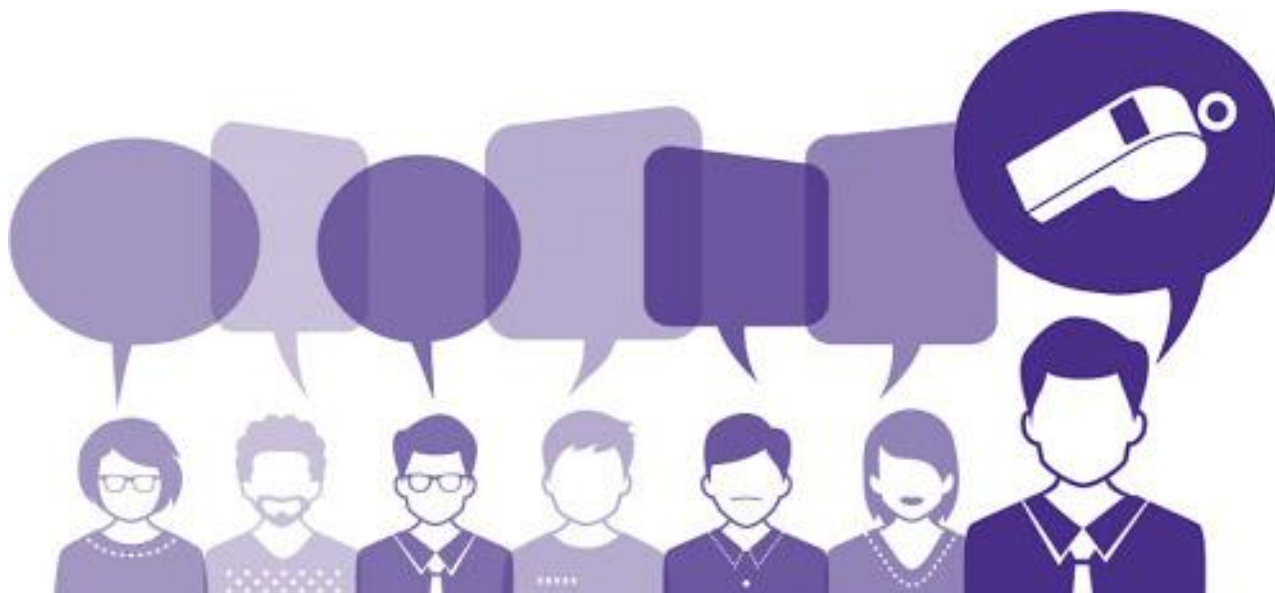
Call [0800 028 0285](tel:08000280285)

Email help@nspcc.org.uk

Appendix – Allegations against staff and Whistleblowing

The school is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness so that staff, governors and volunteers feel able to raise genuine issues of concern with full confidence that it will be appropriately considered and resolved. Staff have a duty to raise concerns particularly so in terms of safeguarding children. A member of staff, who in good faith, ‘whistleblows’ or makes a public interest disclosure will have the protection of the relevant legislation.

The following “Red Flag Behaviours’ give indications of the kinds of situations which should be shared with the designated staff for safeguarding.



An adult who:

- Allows a pupil to be treated badly - pretends not to know it is happening.
- Gossips/shares information inappropriately.
- Demonstrates inappropriate discriminatory behaviour and or uses inappropriate language.
- Dresses in a way that is inappropriate for the job role.
- Does not treat pupils fairly.
- Demonstrates a lack of understanding about personal and professional boundaries.
- Uses his/her position of trust to intimidate, threaten, coerce or undermine.
- Appears to have an inappropriate social relationship with a pupil or pupils.
- Appears to have a special or different relationship with a pupil or pupils.
- Appears to seek out unnecessary opportunities to be alone with a pupil.

Report allegations to:

Headteacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allegations against any staff member, Parent helper, volunteer, student and/or External agency
Chair Of Governors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allegations against the headteacher.

Appendix - Contact details

Family Operations Hub	Any queries	03456037627
Children's Safeguarding Board	General enquiries	escb@essex.gov.uk 0333 013 8936
	Training enquiries	escb.training@essex.gov.uk 033 0138937 03330139797
Essex Duty LADO		https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/Safeguarding/Managing_allegations_in_the_Childrens_Workforce/Pages/ManagingAllegationsInTheChildrensWorkforce.aspx
Children Missing Education		cme@essex.gov.uk
Attendance	Quadrant lead – Derai Lewis-Jones Senior Attendance Specialist	Derai.Lewsi-Jones@essex.gov.uk
Children's deaths	Critical incident – Schools Communication	schoolscommunication@essex.gov.uk
	Contact Jo Barclay	Jo Barclay Head of Education Safeguarding and Wellbeing Education Directorate Essex County Council www.essex.gov.uk telephone: 03330 131078 mobile: 07775 030021 email: jo.barclay@essex.gov.uk
Referral forms		https://www.essex.gov.uk/report-a-concern-about-a-child
Virtual Schools	<p>Natalie Stephenson Headteacher of the Virtual School Essex Virtual School Specialist Education Services Essex County Council Microsite: www.essex.gov.uk/virtualschool Essex County Council www.essex.gov.uk Telephone: 033303 21667 email: natalie.stephenson@essex.gov.uk</p> <p>Sharon Halsey PEP and Virtual School Operational Lead Essex Virtual School Specialist Education Services Essex County Council T: 033303 21200 E: sharon.halsey@essex.gov.uk Welfare Call : www.welfarecall.com</p>	