

Whistleblowing Policy



Formby High School
Determined to Achieve

Introduction

Formby High School's Whistleblowing policy and the procedures contained therein, reflect the School's philosophy 'We are determined to achieve the highest standards in everything that we do'.

The Governors and staff of Formby High School 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, or Code of Practice, which acts as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially, and provides for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter, 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.

Formby High School 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, but 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 the matter will be appropriately considered and resolved, without fear of harassment or victimisation.

The provisions of this policy apply to matters of suspected fraud and impropriety, and not matters of more general grievance which would be dealt with under the School Grievance Procedures.

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 with tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest)

What action should the whistleblower take?

Formby High School 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 a number of 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 (f.grieveson@governor.formbyhighschool.com)
- Staff Governor
- Chair of the Governors' Buildings and Finance Committee (f.murphy@governor.formbyhighschool.com)
- Chair of the Governors' Curriculum and Staffing Committee

(c.adams@governor.formbyhighschool.com)

- Headteacher

If the matter relates to both the Headteacher and Chair of Governors, then the issue should be referred to the Department for Education.

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 wherever possible anonymity will be respected. A record will be maintained of any concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form that, where possible, protects confidentiality) and will be reported as necessary to the Chair of Governors.

Information and advice can be obtained from the charity 'Public Concern at Work'. This charity offers free legal advice in certain circumstances to people concerned about serious malpractice at work. Their literature states that matters are handled in strict confidence and without obligation.

Contact details for the charity are as follows:

Public Concern at Work
Suite 306, 16 Baldwins Gardens
London
EC1N 7RJ
Telephone: 020 7404 6609

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 work undertaken and 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 to 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.

If the whistleblower is still not satisfied with the action, they have the right to take the matter outside of the school. The following are possible contacts:

- The Ombudsman
- The Whistleblower's Trade Union
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- The Police

Respecting confidentiality

Wherever possible, Formby High School 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 unfounded concerns in bad faith, this will also be taken seriously and may constitute a disciplinary offence or require some other form of penalty appropriate to the circumstances.

Conclusion

Existing good practice within Formby High School in terms of its systems of internal control, both financial and non-financial, together with the external regulatory environment in which the School operates, ensures that cases of suspected fraud or impropriety rarely 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.