



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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Introduction

1. The word whistleblowing in this policy refers to the disclosure internally or externally by workers of malpractice, as well as illegal acts or omissions at work.

Policy statement

2. Newcastle Prep School is committed to achieving the highest possible standards of service and the highest possible ethical standards in public life and in all of its practices. Emphasis is placed on creating a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all to be addressed. To achieve these ends, it encourages freedom of speech. It also encourages staff to use internal mechanisms for reporting any malpractice or illegal acts or omissions by its employees or ex-employees.

Other policies and procedures

3. Newcastle Prep School has a range of policies and procedures, which deal with standards of behaviour and conduct at work; they cover Discipline, Grievance, Harassment, and Recruitment and Selection. Employees are encouraged to use the provisions of these procedures when appropriate. However, there may be times when the matter is not about a personal employment position and needs to be handled in a different way.

Examples may be:

- **Malpractice or ill treatment of a child / member of staff by a senior member of staff**
- **Repeated ill treatment of a child / member of staff, despite a complaint being made**
- **A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed**
- **Suspected fraud**
- **Disregard for legislation, particularly in relation to health and safety at work**
- **The environment has been, or is likely to be damaged**
- **Breach of standing financial instructions**
- **Showing undue favour over a contractual matter or to a job applicant**
- **A breach of a code of conduct**
- **Information on any of the above has been, is being, or is likely to be concealed**

This list is not exhaustive.

Newcastle Prep School will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of a whistleblower (including informal pressures), and will treat this as a serious disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Rules and Procedure.

Training and Support

4. Staff receive training and support in how to reporting concerns. Initial training is given as part of induction training for new members of staff and follow up training is given as part of the school's safeguarding procedures. Support is given so that staff feel valued and that a culture of safety and raising concerns is engendered.

Role of Trade Unions

5. Newcastle Prep School recognises employees may wish to seek advice and be represented by their trade union officers when using the provisions of this policy, and acknowledges and endorses the role trade union officers may play in this area.

Designated officers

6. The following people have been nominated and agreed by Newcastle Prep School as designated officers for concerns under this procedure. They will have direct access to the most senior person in the organisation.

Gemma Strong, Deputy Headteacher

Susan Easton, Bursar

Role of designated officer

7. Where concerns are not raised with the line manager, the designated officer will be the point of contact for employees who wish to raise concerns under the provisions of this policy. Where concerns are raised with him/her, he/she will arrange an initial interview, which will if requested be confidential, to ascertain the area of concern. At this stage, the whistleblower will be asked whether he/she wishes his/her identity to be disclosed and will be reassured about protection from possible reprisals or victimisation. He/she will also be asked whether or not he/she wishes to make a written or verbal statement. In either case, the designated officer will write a brief summary of the interview, which will be agreed by both parties.

Role of the Headteacher

8. The designated officer will report to the Headteacher, who will be responsible for the commission of any further investigation.

Complaints about the Headteacher

9. If exceptionally the concern is about the Headteacher then complaints should be directed upwardly from the designated person to Mr Richard Appleby, Chair of the governing body, who will decide on how the investigation will proceed. This may include an external investigation.

The investigation

10. The investigation may need to be carried out under the terms of strict confidentiality i.e. by not informing the subject of the complaint until (or if) it becomes necessary to do so. This may be appropriate in cases of suspected fraud.

10.1 In certain cases, however, such as allegations of ill treatment of children or staff members, suspension from work may have to be considered immediately. Protection of children and staff is paramount in all cases. Children's services will be involved and in the case of an allegation about a staff member involving harm to children, the LADO's advice will be sought in accordance with the procedures set out in the Safeguarding Policy.

10.2 The designated officer will offer to keep the whistleblower informed about the investigation and its outcome.

10.2 If the result of the investigation is that there is a case to be answered by any individual, the Disciplinary Rules and Procedure will be used.

10.3 Where there is no case to answer, but the employee held a genuine concern and was not acting maliciously, the designated officer should ensure that the employee suffers no reprisals.

10.4 Only where false allegations are made maliciously, will it be considered appropriate to act against the whistleblower under the terms of the Disciplinary Rules and Procedure.

Inquiries

11. If the concern raised is very serious or complex, an inquiry may be held.

11.1 Newcastle Prep School recognises the contribution trade union(s) can make to an inquiry, and agrees to consult with the trade union(s) about the scope and details of the inquiry, including the implementation of the recommendations of the inquiry. Newcastle Prep School recognises that in many cases it will be desirable that one or more trade union representatives may be appointed to the panel of the inquiry.

Following the investigation

12. The Headteacher will brief the designated officer as to the outcome of the investigation. The designated officer will then arrange a meeting with the whistleblower to give feedback on any action taken, but this will not include details of any disciplinary action which will remain confidential to the individual concerned. The feedback will be provided within one week of the outcome decision.

12.1 If the whistleblower is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, Newcastle Prep School recognises the lawful rights of employees and ex-employees to make disclosures to prescribed persons such as the Health and Safety Executive, the Audit Commission, the utility regulators or, where justified, elsewhere.

The Law

13. This policy and procedure has been written to take account of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which protects workers making disclosures about certain matters of concern, where those disclosures are made in accordance with the Act's provisions. The Act is incorporated into the Employment Rights Act 1996, which also already protects employees who take action over, or raise concerns about, health and safety at work.

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