



# WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

## PRINCIPLES

1. The Coppice Primary Partnership is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability in the delivery of its services to its children, staff, parents and the general community. Whilst each school has put in place a wide range of rules, regulations, procedures and codes of practice to deliver this commitment, malpractice and/or wrongdoing unfortunately may occur.

## PURPOSES

2. This policy sets out the principles within which whistleblowing issues will be dealt with, subject to the understanding that each case may need to be treated on its own individual merits. This policy applies to all staff, teaching and non-teaching.

## GUIDELINES

3. Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within a school. However, you may be worried about raising such issues or may want to keep the concerns to yourself because you may consider that it is none of your business or that it is only a suspicion. You may also feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to your colleagues, managers or to the academy itself. Also, you may decide to say something but find that you have not spoken to the right person, or you have raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next. It is worth remembering that your Trade Union, professional organisation or regulatory body can play a valuable role in assisting you raise your concerns under this policy.
4. Each school within the Coppice Primary Partnership will not tolerate any such malpractice, abuse or wrongdoing and it expects employees, and others that we deal with, who have concerns about what is happening at work to come forward and voice those concerns. This policy has been introduced to enable you to raise your concerns about such malpractice or wrongdoing at an early stage and in the right way, without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. The policy is intended to encourage and enable you to raise concerns within the academy or if you feel that this is not appropriate then externally rather than overlooking a problem.
5. Every school has particular responsibility for protecting the welfare of children and employees are under an obligation to raise concerns about the abuse of such individuals.

## Independent Advice

6. If you are unsure whether to use this procedure or you want independent advice at any stage you may contact:- PUBLIC CONCERN AT WORK Suite 306, 16 Baldwins Gardens, LONDON, EC1N 7RJ. Tel. No. 0207 404 6609
7. Public Concern at Work is a registered charity which promotes accountability and good governance in organisations and responsibility amongst individuals. It has been at the forefront of recent developments in self-regulation and public interest Whistleblowing. Its lawyers can give you free, confidential advice at any stage about how to raise a concern about serious wrongdoings or malpractice at work. Alternatively, you may wish to seek assistance from your Trade Union or professional organisation. The contact points for recognised Trade Unions within the academy are as set out in Appendix "A".

## What is Malpractice, Abuse or Wrongdoing?

8. Malpractice, abuse and wrongdoing can include a whole variety of issues and some are listed in Appendix "B". However, this is not a comprehensive list but is intended to illustrate the sort of issues which may be raised under this policy. This policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the school itself are at risk and thus if you are aggrieved as an employee about your personal position then you should use the school's existing grievance procedure.

## Assurances to Employees

9. If you raise a genuine concern under this policy you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of retribution as a result. If you are acting in good faith it does not matter if you are mistaken. However, the school will view very seriously any false and malicious allegations which are made under this policy and will regard such allegations by any employee of the school as a serious disciplinary offence.
10. 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.
11. If you ask us to protect your identity by keeping your confidence we will not disclose it without your consent. However, it is possible that we will be unable to resolve the concern raised without revealing your identity (e.g. because your evidence is needed in Court) but if this occurs we will discuss with you how we can proceed.

## How to Raise a Concern

12. Any concerns that you have may be raised orally or in writing and those who wish to make a written statement should set out the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates) and the reasons why you are particularly concerned about the situation. The earlier you express your concern the easier it will be to take action. REMEMBER - IF IN DOUBT RAISE IT.

13. The school and/or the academy trust will not expect you to prove that your concern is true, but you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for you to raise the issue.
14. It is perfectly acceptable for you to discuss your concern with a colleague and you may find it more comforting to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns.
15. If you are an employee and have a concern about any malpractice, abuse or wrongdoing we hope you will feel able to raise it first with your Line Manager or their superior. If you feel unable to raise the matter with your Line Manager or their superior then please raise the matter with the Headteacher or Executive Headteacher.
16. If the above channels have been followed and you still have concerns or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with your Line Manager, their superior or your Headteacher / Executive Headteacher (or you consider that it is not appropriate to do so) then you can contact Andrew Maitland, one of the Coppice Primary Partnership trustees.

#### How the school will handle the matter

17. Once you have told us of your concern we will look into it to assess initially what action should be taken. This may involve an internal enquiry or a more formal investigation. We will tell you who is handling the matter, how you can contact him/her and whether your further assistance may be needed. If you request, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it.
18. It may be necessary to arrange a meeting with you and if you so wish you can be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or a work colleague.
19. Where it is considered appropriate, the matters raised may be referred to external agencies to investigate, e.g. the Police, external auditor or through some other form of independent inquiry. We will of course, tell you if this is going to happen.
20. Within **10 working days** of a concern being raised by you, the person handling the matter will write to you:-
  - ( a ) acknowledging that the concern has been received.
  - ( b ) indicating how we propose to deal with the matter.
  - ( c ) giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response.
  - ( d ) telling you whether any initial enquiries are being made.
  - ( e ) supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms.
  - ( f ) telling you whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.

21. Whilst the purpose of this policy is to enable us to investigate your concerns of malpractice, abuse or wrongdoing and take appropriate steps to deal with it, we will give you as much feedback as we properly can. Please note that we may not be able to tell you the precise action we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed by us to someone else.
22. The school will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising the concern. Thus, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the school will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.

#### Anonymous Allegations

23. You are encouraged to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.
24. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the school. In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account will include:-
  - ( a ) the seriousness of the issues raised
  - ( b ) the credibility of the concern
  - ( c ) the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.
25. If you do raise a concern anonymously and it is considered then it will not be possible for you to be contacted, for instance to inform you of the outcome of your concern or to discuss any aspect of your concern.

#### How to Raise a Concern - Externally

26. This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the school to raise concerns. Whilst we hope this policy gives you the reassurance you need to raise such matters internally, we would rather you raised a matter externally than not at all, provided you are acting in good faith and you have evidence to back up your concern.
27. Thus, you are completely at liberty to raise any concern externally at any time with any of the external agencies set out in Appendix "C". The telephone numbers are general contact numbers so you will need to explain the nature of your concern and ask to be put through to the appropriate Department and/or person.

## APPENDIX "A"

### LIST OF RECOGNISED TRADE UNIONS

#### **G.M.B. (Southern Region)**

Cooper House. 205 Hook Road, Chessington, Surrey KT9 1EA (020 8397 8881)

#### **Unite (TGWU/Amicus)**

Unite the union,: 6-8 Albion Place, Maidstone ME14 5DY (01622 234100)

#### **UNISON (South East Region)**

MEDWAY OFFICE. Suite 14/15, Christchurch House, Beaufort Court, Sir Thomas Longley Road, Strood, Kent, ME2 4FX (01634 285719)

#### **N.E.U. (National Education Union)**

Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD

#### **N.A.S.U.W.T.**

South East Regional Centre Milestone House Portsmouth Road Woking Surrey GU23 7JZ (Tel: 01483 226130)

#### **N.A.H.T.**

1 Heath Square Boltro Road Haywards Heath West Sussex RH16 1BL (Tel: 01444 472472)

## APPENDIX "B"

### ILLUSTRATIVE LIST OF MALPRACTICE, ABUSE OR WRONGDOING

1. Any unlawful act, whether criminal (e.g. theft) or a breach of the civil law (e.g. slander or libel).
2. Maladministration (e.g. unjustified delay, incompetence, neglect advice).
3. Breach of any statutory Code of Practice (e.g. National Code of Local Government Conduct).
4. Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees (e.g. faulty electrical equipment).
5. Abuse of children and vulnerable adults (e.g. through physical, sexual, psychological or financial abuse, exploitation or neglect).
6. Damage to the environment (e.g. pollution).
7. The unauthorised use of public funds (e.g. expenditure for improper purpose).
8. Fraud and corruption (e.g. housing benefit fraud, to solicit or receive any gift/reward as a bribe).
9. Breach of the Member or Employee Code of Conduct.
10. Abuse of power (e.g. bullying/harassment).
11. Other unethical conduct.

APPENDIX "C"

LIST OF EXTERNAL BODIES

NAME & ADDRESS	AREA OF CONCERN
<p><b>Public Concern at Work</b> Suite 306, 16 Baldwins Gardens LONDON, EC1N 7RJ. (Tel. No. 0207 - 404 - 6609)</p>	<p>All matters of malpractice and/or wrong-doing.</p>
<p><b>Financial Reporting Council</b> 8th Floor, 125 London Wall, London, EC2Y 5AS</p>	<p>Financial Probity</p>
<p><b>Local Government Ombudsman</b> The Commission for Local Administration in England The Oaks, No. 2 Westwood Way Westwood Business Park COVENTRY, CV4 8JB. (Tel. No. –024 7682 0000)</p>	<p>Maladministration - causing injustice to a member of the public.</p>
<p><b>Kent Police</b> Maidstone Police Station, Palace Avenue, Maidstone ME15 6NF (Tel. 01622 690690)</p>	<p>Breach of the Criminal Law</p>
<p><b>Police - Fraud</b> (Tel: 0300 123 2040)</p>	<p>Fraud and Public Sector Corruption</p>
<p><b>The Health &amp; Safety Executive</b> Kent Office. International House, Dover Place, Ashford TN23 1HU (Tel:0300 003 1647)</p>	<p>Health &amp; Safety dangers.</p>
<p><b>The Environment Agency</b> Kent Office, Orchard House, Endeavour Park, London Road, Addington, West Malling, Kent, ME19 5SH (Tel: 0370 8506506)</p>	<p>Environmental</p>