CARWARDEN HOUSE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Whistleblowing Policy

Reviewed annually by HT

Adopted by Board of Trustees:

Due for review: September 2027 (annually)

Signed: Chair of Trustees

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1. Introduction

Carwarden House School (the school) is committed to providing the utmost care for its students and staff. We aim to ensure that all members of the school community feel safe in the knowledge that they can voice any concerns in confidence and that they will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague towards a student, for example, or misuse of school funds or resources, are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult position. They may worry that they have misunderstood the situation, and they will wonder whether a report could jeopardize their or their colleague's career. This policy enables staff to raise concerns or allegations in confidence and for a sensitive enquiry to take place.

The school takes responsibility for ensuring that all staff are aware of whistleblowing policy and procedures and how concerns will be managed. The school will ensure that all concerns raised with them by whistleblowers will be treated properly and fairly.

Legislation

The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is set out in the Academy Trust Handbook. This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as government guidance on whistle-blowing. We also take into account the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

2. Definition of 'whistleblowing'

Whistleblowing inside the workplace is defined as the reporting by workers (or ex-workers) of wrongdoing, such as fraud, malpractice, mismanagement, breach of health and safety law, safeguarding or any other illegal or unethical act either on the part of management, the governing body (Board of Trustees) or fellow employees. This will usually be something you have seen at work, though not always. As well as employees, workers may include volunteers, contractors and outside agencies or others. Such a disclosure, made in the public interest, will be under the protection of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

3. Reporting concerns to the school

If you have a concern about another member of staff you should report it to your line manager, a member of the school leadership team, the designated person for safeguarding, or the Headteacher. Other concerns should be reported directly to the Headteacher. Complaints about the Headteacher should be reported to the Chair of Trustees
(chair@carwarden.surrey.sch.uk).

All concerns will be taken seriously by the school and investigated thoroughly. If you are in any doubt as to whether a concern is valid, you should report it, and the school can decide to what extent it needs to be investigated.

4. Wider disclosure

We encourage all our staff to follow the internal procedures outlined in this policy but understand that in some cases you may feel it is necessary to take your concerns to external agencies.

Under the terms of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, you may take your concerns to an external agency where you reasonably believe that:

- you would be victimised by the school
- evidence that you submit in relation to the concern would be concealed or destroyed by the school
- you have previously made a disclosure of substantially the same nature.

We urge staff who take their concerns to external agencies to be careful not to disclose any confidential information. Information that is confidential and should therefore not be disclosed should be outlined in your contract of employment. **Note: it is against the law to publish any information which may lead to the identification of a worker who is subject to an allegation.**

The authorities that may be of help to you are:

- *Children's Social Care Services*
- *Police*
- *NSPCC*
- *Protect*
- *Health & Safety Executive*
- *Audit Commission*
- *Local Citizens Advice Bureau*

- *Department for Education / ESFA*
- *Ofsted*

5. Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence, and the school is committed to protecting the identity of whistleblowers as far as is possible. However, in some circumstances ~~is~~ it may not be possible to do this, for example: if it will prevent a thorough investigation taking place; if there is reason to reveal the name by law; if the whistleblower has to give evidence at any hearings.

In cases where identities are revealed for whatever reason, the school will do its best to support all parties involved and protect them from discrimination and victimisation.

Confidentiality is a priority throughout any investigation, and continues to be once the investigation is over, and we urge staff to closely follow all guidelines relating to confidentiality. Any member of staff that has acted knowingly against this, or revealed confidential information unnecessarily or for vicious reasons, may face prosecution.

6. Anonymous allegations

We would encourage staff to put their name to concerns made as it will aid a more thorough investigation. However, the school will investigate all anonymous allegations seriously; following the proceedings outlined in this policy as far as is possible.

7. False allegations

The school encourages all staff to voice their concerns and allegations safe in the knowledge that those who make allegations in good faith that do not prove to be true will not be reprimanded.

The school may take disciplinary action against staff who make claims that are found to be knowingly false, malicious, vexatious or for personal gain.

8. Responding to a concern

The school will investigate all allegations and concerns thoroughly, but the act of investigation does not indicate that the school has accepted the allegations as true.

Usually, the first course of action will be one of the following:

- an investigation by managers, internal audit, or through the disciplinary process
- an investigation under other procedures such as child/adult protection
- an investigation under procedures designed to deal with allegations made against professionals
- a referral to the police
- a referral to the external auditor or other external investigation
- an investigation under other forms of prosecution and inspection such as the protection of public health and safety
- a referral to an independent investigator.

Any concerns that fall under specific procedures will be followed up as described in their specific policy, e.g., child protection and safeguarding issues will be followed up as described in the school's child protection and safeguarding policy.

9. Whistleblowing procedures

9.1 The role of the whistleblower

Concerns will usually be dealt with in this way:

1. Staff will raise their concern with their line manager or member of leadership team, either in person or, preferably, in writing. If their manager is the subject of the concern, they should go straight to the Headteacher. Staff will be dealt with in confidence and invited to an interview to discuss the allegation. Staff can go straight to the Chair of Trustees with their concern, but they will be asked to explain why they did not feel comfortable taking it to a member of their leadership team or Headteacher.

2. The manager or member of the leadership team that has heard the concern will decide upon the next course of action. If the concern has been raised verbally, they may ask for it to be put in writing. If they decide that it is a genuine concern, and that it is appropriate to follow the whistleblowing procedure, they may take the matter to the Headteacher or the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

3. If there is any reason that the member of staff making the complaint or raising the concern feels that they are unable to speak to any member of the school or governing body, they should contact an independent organisation or Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for advise and support (see links at point 13).

9.2 Role of the leadership team

Hold an interview

Once an allegation has been brought to their attention, the senior staff member, Headteacher or Chair of Trustees will hold an interview with the person making the allegation, in confidence. This will take place immediately if there is concern that a child is at risk of harm, or within 10 working days if this is not the case. During this interview they will:

- get as much information about the basis of the allegation as they can, and will record what is discussed
- discuss the next action points and steps that will be taken with the staff member who has raised the allegation, and ensure that they fully understand what is going to happen; if the standard whistleblowing procedure is not going to be followed, this should be explained and an alternative procedure outlined
- provide support to the whistleblower. They may be worried about their position, getting someone else into trouble, or what they suspect may be happening.

Staff may want to seek the support of their trade union when going through whistleblowing procedures. Staff are allowed to take a representative from their trade union to their interview and subsequent meetings.

Decide on a course of action

If there is cause for concern once the interview has been carried out, the leading member of staff will take the information that they have recorded to the Headteacher (or Chair of Trustees if the Headteacher is of concern).

If it is decided that no further action will be taken this will be explained to the whistleblower within 5 working days. This may be because:

- the leading member of staff, Headteacher or Chair of Trustees does not feel that there is enough evidence to warrant a continued investigation and that it is unlikely that any malpractice has occurred or will occur
- there is a belief that the whistleblower is not acting in good faith
- the matter has already been raised and is being investigated.

The Headteacher, if not already involved, will be informed of the concern even if no further action is to be taken.

9.3 Role of the Headteacher and Board of Trustees

The person who receives the report – whether it is the Headteacher or Board of Trustees – must act on the concern fully. If there is a good reason not to, this will be explained at the next Trustee Board meeting and reported back to the whistleblower.

The Headteacher or Chair of Trustees will decide whether any external authorities need to be reported to on the matter, or whether it is a case for internal investigation.

The decision and progress of the case will be reported back to the leadership member involved, and this will be reported by them to the whistleblower.

The outcomes of any investigations will be reported to the whistleblower in writing to within 10 working days. If they do not receive any information and this time has passed, they may appeal for information through their line manager or Chair of Trustees.

10. Recording, monitoring and evaluation

All staff concerned and involved with any allegation or investigation should keep good records of meetings they attend, discussions that are held, and any outcomes or action points that have been decided.

The Headteacher (and in some cases the Board of Trustees) will review and evaluate allegations, how they have been dealt with, and their outcomes, to prevent similar future cases, and ensure that procedures are being used correctly and are effective.

This policy will be reviewed annually and any relevant cases that have come up during the past year will be taken into account when it is being reviewed.

11. Outcomes

If the whistleblower is dissatisfied and feels that an allegation that they have made has not been dealt with seriously or properly, they can take the matter up with the Local Authority. All school leaders will try their best to deal with allegations fairly and effectively.

12. Independent advice

This policy is designed to help staff with any whistleblowing concerns and procedures, but the school understands that some staff may wish to get advice from independent external agencies. See links below.

13. Contact details

If you have a concern about another member of staff you should report it to your line manager, a member of the school leadership team, a designated person for safeguarding (DSL), or the Headteacher:

dsl@carwarden.surrey.sch.uk
alexewen@carwarden.surrey.sch.uk
claire.lenaghan@carwarden.surrey.sch.uk
emma.hammond@carwarden.surrey.sch.uk
Macie.Bowman@carwarden.surrey.sch.uk
RIchard.Hammond@carwarden.surrey.sch.uk

If the Headteacher is involved they should raise the concerns with the Chair of Trustees, Chris Hamilton: chair@carwarden.surrey.sch.uk

If the Chair of Trustees is involved the Headteacher should raise the concerns with Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 0300 123 1650 (option 3) LADO@surreycc.gov.uk

If a member of staff is in any doubt, they can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are:

Protect	Helpline: **020 3117 2520** E-mail: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk Website: www.pcaw.org.uk

The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally: 0800 028 0285
help@nspcc.org.uk