



# Beddington Infants' School

## Whistle Blowing Policy



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### **Statement of intent**

Beddington Infants' School is committed to open and honest communication and ensuring that the highest possible standards in integrity – we will always treat whistleblowing as a serious matter.

In line with the school's commitment to openness, probity and accountability, members of staff are encouraged to report concerns. This policy will work to ensure that, if an employee sees or suspects that something is wrong, they will raise this with the school. This is known as "blowing the whistle" – a phrase that is used throughout this policy and should be viewed as a positive action of speaking up.

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.

Beddington Infants' School is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice, as well as ensuring safeguarding systems are rigorous and thorough. We treat these issues seriously. The school recognises that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and has 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.

This policy seeks to ensure that any member of the school community or the general public suspecting malpractice knows how to raise concerns and what procedures are in place to deal with the concern. Where this policy necessitates personal or special category data to be processed, it will be done so in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy. This policy will not be confused with the procedure on dealing with harassment at work or the school's Grievance Policy and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) protects employees who "blow the whistle" where the employee reasonably believes that the disclosure falls within the remit of the prescribed person or body and that the information and any allegations are substantially true.
- 1.2 Disclosures made under this procedure will be monitored for statistical purposes as required under the PIDA. The details of any disclosure will remain confidential.

- 1.3 The Headteacher is the first point of contact for whistleblowing queries. If the allegation is related to the Headteacher, the concern will be raised with the Chair of Governors.
- 1.4 Any member of the school community or the general public is able to “blow the whistle”; however, the PIDA only protects employees. Section 7 includes further details on how whistleblowing affects non-employees.

## **2. Definition**

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is “in the public interest”. Examples of whistle-blowing include (but are not limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Pupils’ or staff health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest
- Damage to the environment

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the school count as whistle-blowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistle-blowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

When staff have a concern they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures.

## **3. Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing concern**

### **3.1 When to raise a concern**

Staff should consider the examples in section 2 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or school procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

### **3.2 How to raise the concern**

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

We encourage the whistleblower to raise the matter internally in the first instance to allow those school staff and governors 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 deal specifically 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.

### **3.3 Who to report the concern to**

Headteacher	<i>Liz Kearney</i> Beddington Infants' School <i>Bond Gardens, Croydon Road</i> <i>Wallington, Surrey SM6 7LF</i> <i>Tel: 020 8647 7813</i>
Assistant Headteacher (Designated Safeguarding Lead)	<i>Kelly Reid</i> Beddington Infants' School <i>Bond Gardens, Croydon Road</i> <i>Wallington, Surrey SM6 7LF</i> <i>Tel: 020 8647 7813</i>
Chair of Governors	<i>Stephen Allen</i> Beddington Infants' School <i>Bond Gardens, Croydon Road</i> <i>Wallington, Surrey</i> <i>SM6 7LF</i> <i>Tel: 020 8647 7813</i>

Alternatively, you can call the London Borough of Sutton's Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee on 0208 770 4990 or visit Sutton's website for more details: <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/-/whistleblowing>

The Local Authority has its own procedures for dealing with such matters and will ensure every effort to respect the confidentiality of the whistleblower. The Local Authority will ensure relevant officers of the Department for Education are informed as appropriate.

**3.4** Individuals who would like to seek professional and confidential advice should contact Protect, a registered charity that advises on whistleblowing queries. The Protect website can be accessed [here](http://www.protect-advice.org.uk) ([www.protect-advice.org.uk](http://www.protect-advice.org.uk)), or they can be contacted on 020 3117 2520.

## **4. School procedure for responding to a whistle-blowing concern**

### **4.1 Investigating the concern**

When a concern is received by the headteacher or the chair of governors - referred to from here as the 'recipient' - they will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union or professional association representative.
- Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting, and record the information. If it becomes apparent the concern is not of a whistle-blowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure.
- Reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern. If the concern is found to be malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action may be taken (see section 6 of this policy).
- Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there is:
  - The recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the headteacher or chair of governors, if appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. In other cases, they may need to report the matter to the police.

- The person who raised the concern should be informed of how the matter is being investigated and an estimated timeframe for when they will be informed of the next steps.

## **4.2 Outcome of the investigation**

Once the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the investigating person(s) will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether or not any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified, and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority or police.

They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.

Beyond the immediate actions, the headteacher or chair of governors should, if necessary, review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

## **5. Malicious or vexatious allegations**

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an issue. If an allegation is made in good faith, but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

## **6. Escalating concerns beyond the school**

The school encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with section 4 of this policy, but recognises that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included [here](#).

The Protect advice line, linked to in section 3 of this policy, can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.

## **7. Approval**

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

These procedures have been agreed by the board of governors, who will approve them whenever reviewed.

## **8. Links with other policies**

This policy links with our:

- Staff grievance policy
- Complaints procedure
- Child protection policy