

Queensgate Primary School

Whistleblowing Policy



Date of Policy	Date approved by Governing Body
2017	Spring 2018

REVIEW SCHEDULE			
Date of next Review	Date reviewed by Governing Body	Change previous document (Y/N)	Date circulated (if changes)
Autumn 2021	Autumn 2021	Y (contact details updated)	Autumn 2021

Introduction

The staff and governors of Queensgate Primary School seek to run all aspects of school business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity. In the event that members of school staff become aware of activities which give cause for concern, Queensgate Primary School has 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.

Queensgate Primary School is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. Queensgate Primary 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 local environment but also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the school.

Queensgate Primary School is 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.

The provisions of this policy apply to matters within the Public Interest and not matters of more general grievance which would be dealt with under the Queensgate Primary School grievance procedures.

When does the whistleblowing policy apply?

The law provides protection for workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters. These are called "qualifying disclosures". A qualifying disclosure is one made in the public interest by a worker who has a reasonable belief that:

- a criminal offence has been, is being or is likely to be committed
- a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with a legal obligation to which he or she is subject
- a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur
- the health and safety of an individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered
- the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged or
- concealment of any of the above;

It is not necessary for the worker to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed - a reasonable belief is sufficient. The worker has no responsibility for investigating the matter - it is the school's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place

What action should the whistleblower take?

Queensgate Primary School encourages 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 investigate the matters and take any necessary steps to address the concerns.

Queensgate Primary School has designated a number of individuals to specially 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.

Name & Position	Contact Details
Headteacher	0161 439 3330
Chair of Governors	07429 490684
Any other Governor if there appears to be a pecuniary interest involving either of the above named persons	Contact via school 0161 439 3330

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 anonymity will be respected wherever possible, however details will need to be shared with those investigating the concerns, or if there is a legal or regulatory obligation to disclose information.

Alternatively, if the whistleblower considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the school, the matter should be directed in the first instance to Stockport Council's Corporate Director for Services to People (or an appropriate representative).

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

Individuals also have the right to make a disclosure to one of the prescribed persons/bodies. A list is available at www.gov.uk

In addition, 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 Baldwin Gardens
London
EC1N 7RJ
0171 404 6609

How will the matter be progressed?

The individual(s) in receipt of the information or allegation and the investigating officers 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, for example involvement of other members of school staff, legal or personnel advisors, the police, the Department for Education and Skills, the council.

Records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation. The investigating officers, 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 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 and the council.

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 officers, the governing body and/or the council. The individual also has the right to escalate matters to a prescribed person/body.

Respecting confidentiality

Wherever possible Queensgate Primary School seeks to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the whistleblower and will protect him/her from reprisals. Queensgate Primary School 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

The individual must reasonably believe that the allegations are substantially true. If individuals raise malicious false allegations 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 Queensgate Primary School, in terms of its systems of internal control both financial and non-financial and the external regulatory environment in which the school operates, ensure 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. The document is a public commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned.