

Freegrounds Junior School

Whistleblowing Policy



Date of last review: March 2023

Date of next review: March 2025

Date approved: March 2023

Approved by: Policy working party

Purpose

Freegrounds Junior School is committed to maintaining a culture of openness, accountability and integrity. We seek to ensure that staff feel secure in raising concerns about any activity which may harm individuals or undermine the status of the school.

Who was consulted?

Staff and trade unions were consulted, and local authority guidance was taken into account.

Relationship to other policies

This policy relates especially to all safeguarding policies and the Schools Financial Value Standard.

Equality impact

This policy helps to ensure that if any aspect of the school's policy and practice is inappropriate, staff raising concerns can be confident that they will be treated professionally.

Roles and responsibilities

Unless the headteacher is the focus of the concern the matter should initially be raised with him or her. If the concern is about the headteacher then it should be taken up with the chair of governors.

The **headteacher** will ensure that staff understand that

- concerns may be raised orally or in writing and they must ensure that they receive a satisfactory response
- ideally put their concerns in writing. It is important to provide the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates, names & locations), the reasons for the particular concern about the situation and details of evidence/witnesses
- the earlier the concern is raised the easier it is to take action
- they must always act in good faith, putting the safeguarding and welfare of children, and the status of the school above all other considerations
- the employee ensures that the person with whom they raise the concern is fully aware that they are using this procedure.
- they have the right to discuss their concern in confidence with their trade union representative or work colleague and to invite their trade union representative or work colleague to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection

with the concerns raised

- every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality; however, in order to investigate the matter, information must be obtained and/or other workers questioned, therefore total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. If criminal proceedings require that information is passed on it may become necessary to reveal the employee's identity. In such situations the employee will be consulted before this action is taken
- in order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice or wrongdoing, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take place
- concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will be referred for consideration under those procedures
- concerns will be acknowledged in writing within five working days and the initial enquiry will be undertaken, wherever possible, within ten working days. This will not involve a detailed investigation, but sufficient information will need to be gathered in order that a decision can be made as to whether further investigation will take place
- where appropriate, the matters raised may be:
 - investigated through the disciplinary process
 - referred to the police or other external investigation
 - investigated under another procedure, such as child protection
- the school will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action, within its power, to protect staff when a concern is raised. Staff who suffer harassment or victimisation should inform the individual with whom they raised their initial concern
- staff raising an issue in good faith and in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 are protected from harassment, victimisation or any other detrimental treatment, even if their disclosure of any wrongdoing or malpractice is not substantiated after investigation
- the school expects whistleblowing will be made in "good faith" and will treat abuse of the Whistleblowing policy extremely seriously.

The **chair of governors** will ensure that she or he is familiar with all the points that are listed as head's responsibilities and is prepared for the eventuality of having to respond to a complaint.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

The governing body will monitor awareness of the policy as part of its regular surveys of staff and exit interviews.

Once resolved any complaints and the action taken will be documented and an anonymised summary included in the headteacher's termly report to the governing body, with advice on any implications for policies and practice.