

Greenford High School

Policy Document



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

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GREENFORD HIGH SCHOOL WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

1. Introduction

The staff and governors of Greenford High 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, parents, governors or the school community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern, Greenford High 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.

Greenford High is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. Greenford High 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.

Greenford High 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 considered appropriately and resolved.

The aims of this policy are threefold: -

- to encourage staff to raise concerns about malpractice within the School without fear of reprisal
- to reassure staff that concerns will be taken seriously
- to provide information about how to raise concerns and explain how the Governors may respond.

The provisions of this policy apply to matters of suspected fraud and impropriety and not matters of more general grievance, which would be dealt with under the Greenford High grievance procedures or complaints policy.

2. When might the whistleblowing policy apply?

The type of activity or behaviour, which Greenford High considers should be dealt with under this policy, includes:

- the physical, emotional or sexual abuse of pupils or staff
- unauthorised use of School funds and/or financial maladministration
- fraud and corruption
- failure to comply with legal obligations
- endangering of an individual's health and safety
- damage to the environment
- a criminal offence
- failure to follow financial and contract procedure rules
- showing undue favour to a contractor or a job applicant
- miscarriages of justice
- deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above
- concerns about the professional practice or competence of colleagues, other members of staff or other workers

3. What action should the *whistleblower* take?

Greenford High 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 right the wrong and give an explanation for the behaviour or activity.

Greenford High has designated a number of individuals to specifically deal with such matters and the *whistleblower* is invited to decide which of those individuals would be the most appropriate person to deal with this matter.

Name & Position

- Headteacher: Ms Mia Pye at GHS - mpye@greenford.ealing.sch.uk
- Senior Deputy Headteacher: Ms Amandip Johal at GHS - ajohal@greenford.ealing.sch.uk
- Deputy Headteacher: Mr Ajay Balu at GHS - abalu@greenford.ealing.sch.uk
- Chair of Governors: Sunny Chana – schana@greenford.ealing.sch.uk c/o GHS (pigeon hole in the main office)

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. The identity of the *whistleblower* will be treated in strictest confidence.

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:

The Director of Human Resources,

The Head of Audit or the Head of Legal Services

At: The London Borough of Ealing
Percival House
14-19 Uxbridge Road
Ealing
W5 2HL

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.

4. Advice and Support

The School recognises that employees may wish to seek advice and support from their trade union before blowing the whistle. When any meeting or interview is arranged, you may wish to be accompanied by a trade union or professional association representative. Employees may also wish to seek advice from 'Public Concern at Work (PCAW)', an organisation which is entirely separate from the School. PCAW have lawyers who provide confidential advice, free of charge, to people concerned about wrongdoing at work. They can be contacted by telephone on 027 404 6609 or email at whistle@pcaw.co.uk.

Whistleblowers who consider that they have been victimised as a result of whistleblowing should make a formal complaint to their employer immediately giving details of the way in which they believe they have been subject to detriment and their reasons for thinking that the detriment might be connected with their disclosure. You might also wish to contact the Schools Human Resources Consultancy Team on 020 8825 9478. You may also choose to raise the matter with:

- Professional Association/Trade Union
- Councillor
- Member of Parliament
- Legal Adviser

It is the responsibility of your employer to ensure that you are not victimised as a result of whistleblowing.

Ealing Council also operates a Fraud Hotline: 0800 328 6453 (free call) where information can be left anonymously or to fraudreferrals@ealing.gov.uk

5. How will the matter be progressed?

The individual(s) in receipt of the information or allegation (the investigating officer(s)) 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, the school's external auditors, legal or personnel advisors the police the Department for Education or the Local Authority.

Records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout. 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.

Depending on the nature of the concern or allegation, whether or not it has been substantiated, the matter will be reported to the Governing Body and the Local Authority.

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 officer(s), the Governing Body and/or directed to the Local Authority.

6. Respecting confidentiality

Wherever possible Greenford High seeks to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the *whistleblower* and will as far as possible protect him/her from reprisals. Greenford High 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.

7. Anonymous Allegations

It is recognised that the purpose of a whistleblowing policy is to allow people to make protected disclosure with the protection being against any reprisals or victimisation for disclosures made honestly and in good faith. It is very difficult for some people to come forward and make a disclosure and the prospect of having to identify yourself can make the action of whistleblowing all the more daunting.

You are encouraged to give your name when raising concerns. A concern expressed anonymously is much less powerful and is often more difficult to investigate. The decision whether to investigate an anonymous allegation will be made by the Headteacher and/or the Chair of the Governing Body and/or Ealing Council. When making this decision they will take into account the seriousness of the issues raised, the credibility of what is being said and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.

8. Raising unfounded malicious concerns

Individuals are encouraged to come forward in good faith with genuine concerns with the knowledge they will be taken seriously. If individuals raise malicious unfounded concerns or attempt to make mischief, this will also be taken seriously and may constitute a disciplinary offence or require some other form of penalty appropriate to the circumstances.

9. Protection for the Whistleblower

All concerns raised under this procedure will be treated seriously and a decision made about whether or not an investigation is appropriate. Depending upon the nature of the matter it may be referred to the external auditor or the police. The person to whom you reported your concern will be responsible for keeping you informed about the progress of the investigation and the action, which has been taken, although you may not be told the outcome. In some cases the investigation may result in criminal or disciplinary proceedings. If this happens you may be invited to give a written statement or give evidence at a hearing. The Headteacher and Governors will support you in this process and ensure that you are clear about what will happen.

10. Allegations not made in the public interest

Concerns that are raised frivolously, maliciously, or where they are known to be untrue may result in disciplinary action or, in the case of agency staff, the termination of the agency contract. In the case of contractors, the matter will be reported to the relevant Contract Manager so that a decision can be made about the appropriate action to take.

11. Blowing the Whistle outside the School

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to raise concerns outside the School to the appropriate 'prescribed regulator'. This should only be done where you are raising a genuine concern in the public interest and where you believe the information is true, i.e. more than just suspicion. You are advised to discuss your concerns with a legal advisor, professional association, trade union or PCAW (see above) before reporting them outside the School.

Examples of prescribed regulators are set out below:

- Ofsted (whistleblowing helpline): 0300 123 3155 or whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
- Information Commissioner : <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/report-as-a-whistleblower/>
- Environment Agency :<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-an-environmental-issue-by-your-employer>
- Health and Safety Executive : <https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/index.htm>

As a last resort and provided it is appropriate in all the circumstances, you may choose to raise your concern outside the School to someone other than prescribed regulator e.g. the police or your MP. Provided the disclosure is reasonable in all the circumstances and is not made for personal gain, the preconditions are that you:

- Reasonably believed that you would be victimised if you raised the matter initially within the School
- Reasonably believed that the matter would be “covered up” if you raised the matter internally within the School or the Council and there is no prescribed regulator or
- You have already raised the matter internally or with a prescribed regulator.

You may also choose to raise the matter with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), (020 8825 8364 and asv@ealing.gov.uk), if the matter concerns a potential safeguarding/child abuse issue.

12. Conclusion

Existing good practice within Greenford High 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. The 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. This document is a public commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned.