

Trusting in God; Growing in Wisdom



Whistleblowing Policy

Date: November 2025

Review Date: November 2028

With **thankful** hearts, we **trust** in God as we **grow** in his **love** which **shines** through us. We aim to live our **faith** and grow in **wisdom**.

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and people. (Luke 2:52)

But the wisdom from above is pure first of all; it is also peaceful, gentle, and friendly; it is full of compassion and produces a harvest of good deeds; it is free from prejudice and hypocrisy. (James 3:17)

We are a church school with Jesus at the centre of all that we do. The values of love, joy and peace are at the heart of our learning and teaching. We believe that if we trust in God, and not solely on our own understanding, the children at Whitegate C of E Primary School will have the best possible start to their lives.

INTRODUCTION

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels of Whitegate CofE Primary School, including employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as **staff** in this policy).

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- miscarriages of justice;
- danger to health and safety;
- damage to the environment;
- failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- bribery;
- financial fraud or mismanagement;
- negligence;
- breach of the school's internal policies and procedures;

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- conduct likely to damage the school's reputation;
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- concerns about the harm or risk of harm to children;
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

A **whistleblower** is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If a member of staff has any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the school's activities (a **whistleblowing** concern) they should report it under this policy.

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to a member of staff's own personal circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work. In those cases the member of staff should use the school's Grievance Procedure or Dignity at Work Policy as appropriate.

If a member of staff is uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy they should seek advice from the Head teacher.

Whitegate CofE 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.

These procedures are intended to encourage and enable you to raise serious concerns within school rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside. Premature or unnecessary publicity may damage the School's reputation, impede proper investigations, or hurt individuals unnecessarily.

A Governor shall not disclose confidential information, without first considering using the procedure in this Whistle Blowing Protocol to raise concerns about an issue, unless it is necessary for the disclosure to be made

HARASSEMENT OR VICTIMISATION

You may be put off raising a concern because you are worried about reprisals. If you raise a concern in good faith and genuinely believed it to be well founded, you should have nothing to fear. You will be doing your duty to the school and the public. The governors will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including covert pressure) and will do all it can to protect you. If you are involved in other procedures, such as disciplinary or redundancy, these will be kept quite separate from the investigation of your complaint.

You will not be penalised in any way, where you make an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed after it has been investigated. A concern that is raised frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain may result in action being taken against you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your concern will be treated in strict confidence, within this Procedure – and everything done to keep your identity a secret (if this is what you want). But note that you may have to be a witness at some point. It might then not be possible to keep your identity fully secret.

ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible. This is because concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful than those raised by an identified individual. Anonymous allegations will, however, be considered at the discretion of the School.

In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, as an employee you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you. In the case of Governors, the Governing Board will consider the matter and may make recommendations to the body who appointed or elected the Governor.

RAISING A CONCERN

Who to approach

When deciding who it would be best to approach, take into account the type of matter, its seriousness and its sensitivity – and who may be involved.

You can raise your concern orally (i.e. face to face or over the phone) or in writing. If you write, mark the envelope 'personal and confidential'. Whichever way you choose, please give as much information as you can. Remember also to give your name, and for employees your job, where you work and say if you do not want to be contacted at work (if so, give your home address and phone number). If you are not employed by the school, please let us know your relationship with the school (Example: school parent, governor),

The following headings should help you organise your thoughts but you do not have to follow them exactly:

- Why you are concerned and the background information.
- Any other procedures which you have already used – and what happened.
- The people who are involved and where they work.
- Dates or periods of time.
- The names and jobs of any other people who will (or may) support your concern.

The earlier a concern is raised the better. Whilst you will not be expected to prove that allegations are true, you will need to show that you have a reasonable basis for your concern.

You may want to discuss the matter with one or two colleagues first. Their support could be helpful. There is nothing to stop two or more of you putting your names to a concern. You may wish to involve your trade union or professional association.

HOW YOUR CONCERN WILL BE DEALT WITH

As a start, discreet enquiries will be made by the Head teacher or governors to decide whether an investigation is needed and if so, how it should be carried out. This will help protect everyone concerned. The overriding principle will be the public interest.

If this first, testing, stage shows that the concern should be followed up, there will either be a special examination of another procedure will be used, if appropriate. Examples of special procedures are the school's Disciplinary Procedure, or the school's child protection procedures. It may be necessary to involve other agencies, for example the police or the school's finance officer. Any urgent action will be taken before the investigation starts. It may be possible of course, to sort out the concern without a detailed investigation.

WHAT YOU WILL BE TOLD

Within 10 working days of your concern being received, the manager who carries out the initial enquiries will write to you confirming:

- What initial enquiries have been made.
- How your concern has been or will be dealt with.
- How long any further action may take (as far as this can be known).

- What further work is planned and how you may be involved.

The amount of contact you have with the people considering the matter will depend on many things. These include the type of concern, the potential difficulties of investigating it and the availability of information. You may need to provide more help. Wherever possible, you will be told the final outcome of an investigation.

A confidential record will be maintained by the Clerk to the Governing Board of all concerns raised.

PERSONAL SUPPORT

Whitegate CofE School will do all it can to minimise any difficulties which you may have because you have mentioned your concern. As far as we can, you will be offered personal support, which the manager leading the investigation will arrange. For example, if you had to give evidence in disciplinary or criminal proceedings, full advice about the procedure would be given to you.

IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE SCHOOL'S REPNSE

This procedure is meant to give everyone an effective way to raise a concern *within* the school (and if possible, to resolve it internally). You should not feel that you have to take an issue outside the school to get satisfaction. But if you are still unhappy after using the procedure (and getting a final response), you are entitled to consider taking your concern elsewhere. If you do this, these are some contacts which are available:

- The Council's external auditors (see the last page for contact details)
- Your trade union
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- A relevant professional or regulatory body
- A relevant voluntary organisation
- The police

If you raise the matter outside the County Council, you must take into account the rules about disclosing confidential information (for employees, see Section 12 of the Code of Conduct).

EXTERNAL DISCLOSURES

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases staff should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for staff to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. The school strongly encourage staff to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of the school's staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a supplier or service provider. In some circumstances the law will protect staff if they raise the matter with the third party directly. However, the school encourages staff to report such concerns internally first. Staff should contact their line manager, the Senior Leadership Team or the Head teacher for guidance.

CONTACT DETAILS

Independent whistleblowing charity	<p><u>Helpline: (020) 3117 2520</u></p> <p><u>E-mail form:</u> https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/</p> <p><u>Website:</u> www.protect-advice.org.uk</p>
Legal Services Helpline	<u>01244 972258</u>
Audit and Risk Management (LA)	Whistleblowing2@cheshirewestandchester.go.uk
Chair of Governors	<p>Teresa Finney</p> <p>chair@whitegate.cheshire.sch.uk</p>
Head teacher	<p>Caroline Mackenzie</p> <p>01606 212203</p>

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Date of policy: March 2026

PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR POLICY:	<i>CAROLINE MACKENZIE</i>
APPROVED:	<i>17.03.25</i>
SIGNED:	<i>T FINNEY</i>
TO BE REVIEWED:	<i>MARCH 2027</i>