



Queen's Croft High School

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

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WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Queen's Croft High School is committed to operating with honesty and integrity. We expect all colleagues to operate on this basis and to adhere to the school's policies, procedures and code of conduct. Fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing will not be tolerated.

The aim of this policy is to encourage colleagues to report suspected wrongdoing internally rather than externally as a first resort. Any concerns raised under this policy will be treated seriously and dealt with confidentially.

Any colleague raising a concern under this policy will not be treated less favourably for raising concerns as outlined in this procedure. This means that any colleague who raises a concern under this policy will not be subjected to a detriment nor will they be dismissed for doing so.

This policy applies to employees of the school, referred to in this policy as colleagues including agency workers, trainees or anyone working on a casual basis.

The policy and procedure applies to all colleagues, regardless of length of service, but does not form part of the contract of employment and can be varied from time to time.

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when a worker reports suspected wrongdoing at work.

For example:

- A criminal offence; and/or
- A miscarriage of justice; and/or
- Damage to the environment; and/or
- Breach of a legal obligation; and/or
- A danger to health and safety; and/or
- A deliberate concealment of any of the above

A colleague can report things that are not right, are illegal or if anyone at work is neglecting their duties, including:

- someone's health and safety is in danger
- damage to the environment
- a criminal offence
- the company isn't obeying the law (like not having the right insurance)
- covering up wrongdoing

Any issues to do with child protection or safeguarding pupils should be raised under the Queen's Croft High School Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

A colleague who has a reasonable belief that a wrongdoing has or may be committed and raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above, is a whistleblower and is protected under this policy.

The school will, at its discretion, consider disclosures that are made anonymously, although such disclosures are inevitably much less powerful. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if school cannot obtain further information from the whistleblower. It is more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. The school will also treat every disclosure in confidence, and only reveal the identity of the person making it if absolutely necessary (e.g. if required in connection with legal action).

Rights of the Whistleblower

All colleagues are encouraged to use this policy to raise genuine concerns and will not be treated less favourably for doing so, even if they are mistaken in their belief.

Any colleague who raises a concern under this policy will not be subjected to a detriment nor will they be dismissed for doing so. Any colleague who believes that they have been subjected to a detriment for raising a complaint should raise the matter with the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.

Victimisation of a whistleblower by any other colleague for raising a concern under this policy will in itself constitute a disciplinary offence.

Where the school believes that a colleague has knowingly made a false allegation or acted maliciously, the colleague will be subject to disciplinary action, which may include dismissal for gross misconduct.

This policy does not deal with any complaints relating to a colleague's own treatment at work or own contract of employment. Those matters should be raised under the Grievance procedure or the Bullying and Harassment procedure, as appropriate.

An exception to this will be when the matter of concern arises from the colleague's own treatment at work that is arising from the whistleblowing matter they have raised previously.

This policy does not deal with any complaints relating to a colleague's own treatment at work or own contract of employment. Those matters should be raised under the Grievance procedure or the Bullying and Harassment procedure, as appropriate.

Making a Whistleblowing Complaint

To make a whistleblowing complaint the whistleblower has to meet certain conditions.

If the disclosure is made to the school, it must be in the public interest and the whistleblower must have a reasonable suspicion that the alleged malpractice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.

If the disclosure is made to a regulatory body then as well as satisfying the conditions required for disclosure to the school, the whistleblower must also honestly and reasonably believe that the information they provide and any allegations contained in it are substantially true.

For example, a colleague will be eligible for protection if:

- they honestly think what they're reporting is true

- they think they're telling the right person
- they believe that their disclosure is in the public interest

If the disclosure is made to other external bodies then as well as satisfying the conditions required for to the school, in all circumstances of the case it must be reasonable for them to make the complaint. Further the whistleblower must:

- reasonably believe that they would be victimised if they raised the matter internally or to a regulatory body or,
- reasonably believe that evidence is likely to be concealed or destroyed or,
- have already raised the concern with the school and/or relevant regulatory body and,
- reasonably believe that the information they provide and any allegations contained therein are substantially true.

If the disclosure is made to other external bodies and is of an "exceptionally serious" nature – which in a local government setting could include, say, the alleged abuse of children or vulnerable adults in an authority's care or corruption then the whistleblower will not be required to:

- have raised the matter concerned internally first
- believe that they will be subject to a detriment for raising the disclosure internally
- believe that the evidence is likely to be concealed or destroyed.

We hope that in many cases the whistleblower will be able to raise any concerns with their line manager or the Head Teacher.

If the matter relates to the Headteacher the whistleblower should contact the Chair of Governors. Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

The initial contact can be by telephone or in writing and, if the latter, should be in a sealed envelope addressed to the Contact Officer concerned and marked: Strictly Private and Confidential. E-mail cannot be guaranteed as a secure medium and it is not recommended as a channel for reporting issues related to this policy.

When a concern has been raised this will be acknowledged within 5 working days and details of the next steps will be given. An initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation will be made. The whistleblower may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

At any meetings arranged to discuss the disclosure the whistleblower may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. The companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

In some cases school may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable school to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

School will aim to keep the whistleblower informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for

confidentiality may prevent school giving specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. All parties should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

If school concludes that a whistle-blower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistle-blower will be subject to disciplinary action

As a result of any such disclosure the following action may be taken:

- internal investigation
- report to the Police
- report to external audit
- independent enquiry
- any combination of the above

If the colleague does not reasonably believe that appropriate action has been taken in relation to their concern, then they may raise it externally to the prescribed regulator or our external auditors.

External Auditor
PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP
Cornwall Court
19 Cornwall Street
Birmingham B3 2DT

The charity, Public Concern at Work, can advise the colleague about raising the concern externally. This will include advising who the appropriate prescribed regulator is. The website for Public Concern at Work is <http://www.pcaw.co.uk/>

APPENDIX 1

Contact officers

Peter Hawksworth (Headteacher) Queen's Croft High School, Birmingham Road, Lichfield, WS13 6PJ 01543 227 245	Headteacher@queenscroft.staffs.sch.uk
Katy Hope (Chair of Governors) Queen's Croft High School, Birmingham Road, Lichfield, WS13 6PJ 01543 227 245	K.hope@queenscroft.staffs.sch.uk