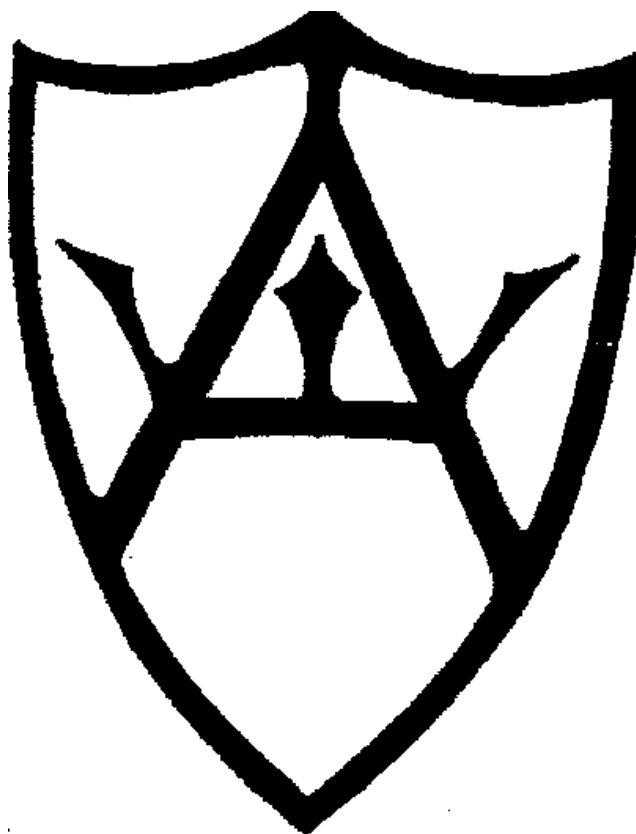


Alfriston School



Confidential Reporting ("Whistle-blowing") Policy

Approved by Governors: Sept 2015

CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING ("WHISTLE-BLOWING") POLICY - RAISING CONCERNS

INTRODUCTION

The governors of Alfriston School are convinced that any member of the school community who has serious concerns about an aspect of practice in the School should be confident that he or she can in good faith bring such concerns to the attention of those who should know about it in complete confidence and without any fear of reprisal or victimisation. This policy is intended to provide that level of confidence and a clear framework for reporting such concerns. It should be read in conjunction with other personnel policies adopted by the governing body.

PRINCIPLES

- The governors are committed to the highest standards of openness and expect members of the school community to come forward and voice appropriate concerns;
- This policy covers major concerns that fall outside the scope of other policies;
- All concerns will be treated in confidence and your identity will not be revealed without your prior agreement;
- This Policy is informed by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Employment Rights Act 1996 which provide specific rights for workers who disclose information about alleged wrongdoings in certain specific circumstances.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The working of this policy will be evaluated by the headteacher and governors, and amended as and when necessary by the governors' Pupil & Staff Achievement and Development (PSAD) Committee in close consultation with the headteacher and the staff.

APPENDIX: FRAMEWORK FOR CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING

1. This policy **applies to** all employees of the School, and all contractors and their staff working there, e.g. agency staff, builders and drivers; also providers of works, services and supplies including external contractors and those providing services under a contract with the County Council or the School.
2. This policy **aims to**:
 - encourage you to feel confident to make a disclosure of concerns about issues that fall under this policy;
 - provide avenues for you to raise those concerns;
 - reassure you that you will be protected from being penalised or suffering detriment.
3. The **kinds of concern** falling to be disclosed under this policy are any serious concerns about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of officers or members of the County Council or the School or others acting on their behalf. This could be something that, for example:
 - makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards;
 - is against the School's policy;
 - falls below established standards of practice;
 - amounts to improper conduct.
4. **Examples** of such concerns could include:
 - a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed;
 - a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligations;
 - disclosures relating to miscarriages of justice;
 - Health and Safety risks, including risks to the public;
 - damage to the environment;
 - something that is against County Council standing orders and policies;
 - information relating to any of the above categories is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.
5. This policy **does not cover**:
 - a grievance relating to any matter concerning your own employment – this should be brought forward under the School's Grievance Policy;
 - a challenge to decisions, practices and policies with which you disagree.
6. You are encouraged to **put your name** to allegations under this policy, since anonymous concerns are likely to carry much less weight. However, anonymous concerns will still be considered by the school leadership team (SLT) and the

governing body. Neither the SLT nor the governors will tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take appropriate action to protect you.

7. **Procedures for raising a concern or making a disclosure** under this policy are straightforward. You should do so either orally or in writing to your immediate line manager, or to the headteacher. If your concerns relate to the headteacher, you should do so to the Chair of Governors. You should make it clear at the outset that you are doing so under this policy.
8. **You will be expected** to give as much background and history as you can, and while you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate that you are making the disclosure in good faith and that you reasonably believe that the information disclosed, and any allegation contained within it, are substantially true. **None of this policy will apply unless you act in good faith.**
9. The **response to your disclosure** will entail initial enquiries to decide whether an investigation is appropriate – this is to protect all individuals concerned with the disclosure. Depending on the nature of your concerns, the matters raised may be:
 - investigated by the SLT, by internal audit or through disciplinary procedures;
 - be referred to the police and/or other appropriate agencies;
 - be referred to the external auditor;
 - form the subject of an independent enquiry;
 - be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.
10. **Within 10 working days** the appropriate representative of the governing body or the SLT will:
 - acknowledge receipt of your concern;
 - indicate how it is proposed to deal with the matter;
 - give an estimate of how long this is likely to take;
 - provide information on the support available to you.
11. Should there be a need for **investigating officers to meet you**, this can be off-site if you wish and you can be accompanied by a professional association or trade union representative or someone else who can support and advise you. All parties will be expected to maintain strict confidentiality.
12. The school will take steps to **minimise any difficulties** which you may experience as a result of raising a concern, and if you are required to give evidence at a criminal or disciplinary hearing the school and, where applicable, the County Council will support you.
13. Although the School must act in confidence in relation to any disclosure made under this policy, it will do its best to **inform you of the outcome** of any investigation wherever possible.
14. Governors hope that this policy will give you the reassurance to raise your concerns within the School. However, **as a last resort**, you may wish to raise

them with the County Council. East Sussex County Council has a Confidential Reporting Hotline which can be used to report concerns. This can be accessed by either dialling 01273 481995 or emailing:

confidentialreporting@eastsussex.gov.uk.

Please note that this hotline is monitored by Internal Audit.

Should you not wish to report your concerns using the normal management structure or the Confidential Reporting Hotline, or if your concerns are about management, you can use any of the contacts listed below:

- The Chief Executive, County Hall – 01273 481950
- The Assistant Chief Executive, County Hall – 01273 481564
- The Chief Operating Officer, County Hall – 01273 481412
- The Chief Finance Officer, Business Services, County Hall – 01273 335078
- The Head of Assurance, Business Services, County Hall – 01273 481447

If you wish to raise your concerns in writing to any of the above, please address your letter to:

County Hall St Anne's Crescent Lewes BN7 1UE

15. If you were to raise the matter **outside the County Council**, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information, and you must ensure that you satisfy the following **five** conditions in order to gain the specific rights under this policy or the relevant legislation above:

- a. you must have made the qualifying disclosure in good faith;
- b. you must reasonably believe that the information disclosed, and any allegation contained in it, is substantially true;
- c. the disclosure must not have been made for the purposes of personal gain;
- d. one of the following **three** conditions must apply:
 - i. at the time of the disclosure, you reasonably believe that you will be subjected to detriment by raising the concern with the employer or a prescribed person (listed in the Schedule to the Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 1999) – or
 - ii. where there is no prescribed person in relation to the relevant failure, you reasonably believe that it is likely that evidence will be concealed or destroyed if you make a disclosure to your employer – or
 - iii. you have previously made a disclosure of substantially the same information to either your employer or a prescribed person;
- e. in all of the circumstances of the case, it is reasonable to make the disclosure.

16. The following **external contacts** will be able to provide you with support on a confidential basis:

- **Public Concern At Work**
Suite 301,

16 Baldwins Gardens,
London
EC1N 7RJ

Telephone: 020 7404 6609
Email: whistle@pcaw.org.uk
<http://www.pcaw.org.uk/>

- **Your professional association or trade union**