Church Hill C of E Junior School

'Let Your Light Shine' (Matthew 5:16)

Together Everyone Achieves More

Whistleblowing Policy

Signed by: .....

Date: 30/6/26

Approved by Governor

Date: 30/06/26

Signed on behalf of the Governing body: .....
(Chair of Governors)

Next Review Date: July 2027

This policy applies to all employees and workers, including Head Teachers, Teachers and all Support Staff regardless of whether they are permanent, fixed term, casual, agency or volunteers, this includes Governors/Trustees, consultants and contractors.

This policy will be implemented in accordance with the Trust's Scheme of Delegation and Articles of Association. The constitution of formal panels will be determined by the Trust's Scheme of Delegation.

This policy does not form part of employees' terms and conditions of employment and therefore may be subject to change at the discretion of the Trust/Governing Body.

For the purposes of this policy Head Teachers/Principals will be referred to as Head Teacher and School/Academy will be referred to as school.

1. Purpose

1.1 This policy encourages and enables workers to promptly raise ("disclose") any serious concerns ("wrongdoings") they may have about the activities of employees, Governors/Trustees, or external organisations in relation to their dealings with the school, without worrying about the repercussions of doing so.

1.2 This document sets out the procedure for those wishing to raise a whistleblowing concern and:

- Outlines how individuals can raise their concerns in respect of any wrongdoings at work.
- Outlines who an individual can escalate their concerns to, if, following the completion of any internal processes, their concerns remain, and
- Outlines the protection from reprisals or victimisation afforded to individuals who blow the whistle where the matter raised is in the public interest.

1.3 Concerns relating to an individual's own contract of employment, or complaints about bullying or harassment, will normally be raised and addressed under the school's grievance procedure. Allegations of sexual harassment may be raised either under the grievance procedure, where the concern relates primarily to the individual's own treatment at work, or under this whistleblowing policy, where the disclosure meets the statutory criteria for a Public Disclosure, including that the individual reasonably believes the matter is raised in the public interest. Where appropriate, issues of sexual harassment may be addressed under the grievance procedure alongside the protections afforded by this whistleblowing policy.

2. What is Whistleblowing?

2.1 Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoings or dangers at work. Such disclosures are referred to as "Protected Disclosures".

2.2 To qualify as a Protected Disclosure, an individual raising the concern must reasonably believe that one of the following specific categories is either already happening, has happened, or is likely to happen in the future **and** that the disclosure being made is in the public interest:

- A criminal offence, for example fraud
- an act creating a risk to health and safety of others,
- an act causing damage (or risk of damage) to the environment,
- A miscarriage of justice,
- Sexual harassment
- Is potentially unlawful or a breach of, or failure to comply with any other legal obligation,
  Or
- Is a deliberate attempt by an individual or group of people to conceal the any of the above.

The statutory provisions governing protected disclosures are set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended), including amendments made by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Employment Rights At 2025. 2.3 An individual who raises a whistleblowing concern has the right not to be subjected to any detrimental treatment (including being unfairly penalised, disciplined or dismissed) as a result of raising the concern.

2.4 Where an individual is found to have knowingly raised a false concern in bad faith (for example, maliciously), this may be treated as a disciplinary offence. No action will be taken against an individual solely because a concern raised in good faith is not upheld. If an individual believes they have been subjected to detrimental treatment as a result of raising a whistleblowing concern, they should report the matter to the Chair of Governors.

2.5 Where an individual has knowingly raised false concerns under this policy, this may also be treated as a disciplinary offence and will be considered under the school's disciplinary procedure.

3. Confidentiality

3.1 The identity of those who raise concerns will be protected as far as practically possible. However, the investigation may out of necessity, reveal the source of the information and statements made by those who raised the issue may be used as part of any formal process, for example if a formal process/hearing is required, thus revealing the source of the concern.

3.2 Individuals' are encouraged to put their name to any allegations made, however, the school will consider concerns expressed anonymously. Any action taken in respect of anonymous concerns will be considered at the discretion of the school, taking into account:

- The seriousness of the issues raised,
- The credibility of the concern,
- The likelihood of the allegation being substantiated, and
- Whether it is considered that the allegations are untrue/false.

3.3 Individuals who make a Protected Disclosure under this policy are protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 from any repercussions on their present position or future career. The Act does not protect anyone who is acting maliciously or making false allegations. The school does not tolerate any form of harassment or victimisation against an individual raising a concern.

4. Raising a Concern

4.1 **Who can raise a concern?**

Any individual who currently works for or who has previously worked for the school and who has a genuine concern relating to any wrongdoing (where it is considered to be in the public interest) may raise a complaint. In addition, a concern may also be raised under the policy by an individual who works for an organisation that provides a service to the school such as agency workers, volunteers and Governors/Trustees.

4.2 **How to raise a concern:**

Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing. It is important that the individual provides as much detail as possible, including:

- Details of the suspected wrongdoing, including times, dates and places etc.
- The specific names of individuals involved,
- What actions the individual is seeking by raising the concern.

4.3 **Who to raise your complaint with:**

Individuals should normally raise their concerns with their Line Manager in the first instance. However, this may not always be appropriate depending on the nature of the concern, the seriousness and sensitivity of the issue, and who is allegedly involved. Alternatively, individuals may contact:

- the Head Teacher if the concern is regarding their line manager, or where the individual feels unable to approach their immediate line manager.
- a member of the Governing Body/Board of Trustees where the concerns being raised relate to the Head Teacher, or member of the Senior Leadership Team, or
- their Trade Union representative for advice and support on raising an issue.

Where an individual is concerned that the Governing Body is acting or proposing to act unreasonably or has failed to discharge its duties, they may in the first instance raise this with the school directly. Alternatively, they can contact the Director of Children and Family Services at Leicestershire County Council or the Secretary of State for Education via the DfE and/or Ofsted (Tel: 0300 123 3155 or via email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk).

Where concerns are of a serious nature and criminal activity is suspected, individuals have the right to raise issues directly with the Police or other relevant agency as they see fit.

4.4 **Support:**

It is acknowledged that raising a concern can be difficult therefore where a worker raises a concern, consideration should be given on how best to support them. Advice on how to support individuals can be sought from the schools HR Adviser.

5. Action Following Receipt of a Whistleblowing Concern

5.1 Within 10 working days: the person with whom the concern is raised will write to the individual who submitted the complaint to:

- Acknowledge that the concern has been raised;
- Indicate how it is proposed to deal with the matter;
- Advise whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not; and
- Confirm, where possible, an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response.

5.2 The action taken will depend on the nature of the concern being raised. For example, the matter may:

- Be investigated internally,
- Be investigated by a third party (such as HR),
- Be referred to the School External Auditor,
- Be referred to the Police, or
- Form the subject of an independent inquiry.

5.3 To protect individuals and the school, initial enquiries may be made to determine whether an investigation is appropriate and what form it should take. Allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (e.g. child protection, sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination issues) will be dealt with under relevant policies where appropriate, alongside the protections afforded under this whistleblowing policy. 5.4The purpose of the investigation is to establish the facts and collate appropriate and relevant information in relation to the concern(s) being raised. Further enquiries may also be necessary in order to gather evidence relevant to the situation and to ensure the matter has been thoroughly considered. This may include the collation of documentary evidence and/or witness.

5.5 Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

5.6 The individual will have the right to be accompanied at any meetings by a Trade Union representative or work colleague.

6. Outcome of the Investigation

6.1 If an investigation is warranted, the individual will be informed of the outcome in writing and any next steps or action that will be taken. However, the individual will not be informed of the detail of the investigation or any action taken against another employee (e.g. disciplinary action) or where there are sensitive issues that need to remain confidential.

6.2 The individual who raised the concern has no right of appeal against the outcome of the investigation, however, if the individual is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation and wishes to take the matter outside the school, they may contact:

- For safeguarding issues only, Leicestershire County Council's Allegations Manager (LADO) (Tel: 0116 3055641 or 0116 305 8161),
- Their local Councillor (for those who live in the area of the school),
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations; (Department for Education, EFA, Ofsted, HM Revenue and Customs),
- The Police,
- The whistleblowing charity, Protect (Tel: 020 3117 2520), www.protect-advice.org.uk
- The National Audit Office (Tel: 020 7798 7999), www.nao.org.uk

6.3 When taking the matter outside of the school, the individual must ensure that they do not disclose any confidential information about the school or its employees and pupils which is not relevant to the issue.

7. Responsible Officer

7.1 The Chair of Governors/Trustees has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. The Chair of Governors/Trustees must maintain a record of concerns raised and their outcomes and will report, as necessary, to the Governing Body.