

Brine Leas School

An Academy

Confidential Reporting Procedure Policy (Whistleblowing)

INTRODUCTION

This procedure has been developed for the use of Brine Leas School employees. However it can also be used by agency staff, other people acting in a similar capacity to an employee, by Contractors and their staff and other individuals providing services/support to the Brine Leas School (e.g. volunteers). The same principles in terms of protection from harassment and victimisation, confidentiality, support and information on the school's response will apply.

All disclosures will be dealt with appropriately, consistently, fairly and professionally.

Please note that any Safeguarding concerns will override this policy.

You are encouraged to help maintain standards by drawing attention, within the school to any concerns that you may have about a failure to observe standards or improper conduct. The school wants normal management channels to be sufficiently open and effective for most concerns to be raised this way. Where this is not appropriate or possible a Confidential Reporting Procedure can be used. It offers the means to raise concerns you may have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of staff or other people acting on behalf of the school

In order to maintain the highest standards of integrity, it is important that all staff take responsibility for their own behaviour and conduct. '(Staff) must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school' *Teachers' Standards 2013*. However, from time to time, there may be individuals who fail to live up to the standards, which have been set and agreed. If you suspect someone of breaking the rules or wrongdoing, you have a responsibility to report this. Staff often have misgivings about reporting another member of staff, particularly if that person is a colleague or a friend. To help overcome some of the anxiety and discomfort, we have introduced this Confidential Reporting Procedure.

As a public service organisation, Brine Leas School will use public funds appropriately and apply the highest standards of conduct throughout the organisation. The Confidential Reporting Procedure encourages you to help maintain these standards, by enabling you to draw attention to any concerns which you may have about the operation of the school. Initially Brine Leas School will seek to deal with your concerns through its internal procedures. Public disclosure may well be justified at some point but you are encouraged not to pursue this angle until the school has had the opportunity to investigate the concern. Premature or unnecessary publicity may impede proper investigations or hurt individuals. If the disclosure proves to be unproven it may needlessly damage the school's reputation.

Examples of concerns that may be raised under the procedure are:-

- Law breaking.
- Miscarriages of justice.
- Support for extreme organisations (as defined under the Prevent Agenda).

- Health and safety risks (to anyone).
- Damage to the environment.
- Unauthorised use of money.
- Dishonesty, fraud and corruption.
- Sexual, physical, emotional or financial abuse of stakeholders[#]. **
- Serious breaches of school policies.
- Abuse of position.
- Any criminal activity.
- Decision-making for personal gain.
- Other unethical conduct.

[#] This could be students, staff, parents or members of the community.

^{**} Note: This is covered in the BLS Safeguarding Policy with regards to a matter relating to a student

The Confidential Reporting Procedure offers the means to raise concerns you may have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of staff or elected members or other people acting on behalf of the school. A concern may arise, for example, from worries about failure to observe standards or policies being circumvented or improper conduct.

The procedure does not cover concerns that are covered by other procedures. For example, an employment problem may well be covered by the Grievance Procedure.

HARASSMENT 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 school 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 and it is confirmed to be unfounded after it has been investigated. However, 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 secret (if this is what you want). Please 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

An anonymous concern is likely to carry much less weight than one which is signed; the investigating manager would have to decide whether or not to accept it. It is more likely that an anonymous allegation is made for malicious purposes and therefore this decision would depend on the seriousness of the issue, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of being able to confirm the allegation in other ways. Signed concerns are always better.

RAISING A CONCERN

- **Who to Approach?**

There is a list of the managers within Brine Leas School with whom you can raise a concern (see the last page for contact addresses and phone numbers).

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. Some examples are given:-

- The Business Manager
- The HR Manager
- The Line Manager for your team or the Member of Leadership responsible for your area.
- The Deputy Headteacher
- The Head of School
- The Chair of Governors

- **How to Raise Your Concern**

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 position within school, 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 (for example, contractor, partner organisation, parent or member of the community)

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 – 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.

- **Involvement of your Trade Union or Professional Association**

You may ask your Trade Union or professional association for other support, to raise a matter on your behalf. In this case - if you wish - you can remain anonymous when the concern is first raised. But you may have to be involved personally if the matter goes further.

You may also have your Trade Union, professional association or a colleague at any meeting or interview.

- **Help with the procedure**

Any of the following will help you to understand the procedure:-

- The manager for your team.
- The Member of Leadership responsible for your area/department
- The Business Manager
- The Head of School

- **How Your Concern Will Be Dealt With**

As a start, discreet enquiries will be made by a member of the Leadership Team 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 a proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school.

If your concern is regarding the Head of School, you should contact the Chair of Governors.

If this first testing stage shows that the concern should be followed up, there will either be a special examination or another procedure used, if appropriate. Examples of special procedures are found within the Grievance Policy or child protection procedures. It may be necessary to involve other agencies, for example the police, the school's external Auditors or external agencies. 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.

Records will be kept of any investigation work undertaken and all associated actions.

- **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 information.

Wherever possible, you will be told the final outcome of an investigation.

PERSONAL SUPPORT

Brine Leas 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 RESPONSE

This procedure is meant to give everyone an effective way to raise a concern within Brine Leas 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.

However 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:-

- Your trade union
- A Citizens Advice Bureau
- A relevant professional or regulatory body
- A relevant voluntary organisation
- The Police
- The School's external auditors
- The School's Improvement Partner (SIP)

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

MONITORING THE PROCEDURE

The school's Monitoring Officer, working with the Chair of Governors will monitor how the procedure works. They will report at least annually to an appropriate Committee of the school (the Staffing Committee).

CONTACT DETAILS

School Contacts	Mrs K Bradshaw, Business Manager Mr D Cole, Head of School Mr P Whitehead, Deputy Headteacher
Chair of Governors	Mrs Su Turner , c/o Brine Leas School
Vice Chair of Governors	Mr T Marsden, c/o Brine Leas School
External auditors	Afford Bond, 31 Wellington Road, Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 7ED Tel: 01270 623 731
Public Concern at Work	Tel: 020 7404 6609 www.pcaw.co.uk
Trade Union	Unison Whistleblowing hotline Tel: 0800 597 9750
Audit Commission	Antifraud and Corruption Unit Tel: 020 7630 1019

Local Government Ombudsman The Oaks, Westwood Way, Westwood Business Park,
Coventry, CV4 8JB
Tel: 0845 602 1983
www.lgo.org.uk

DfE email: academy.questions@education.gov.uk

Ofsted www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Financial Impropriety of Senior Staff

There have been some secondary schools where the most senior staff have been involved in theft. The school does have a policy, which makes clear distinction between the roles of staff and provides distinct segregation of duties in order to prevent any fraud occurring. However no system is foolproof and there are clear procedures set out with regards to financial irregularity in school.

The Confidential Reporting Procedure does not really encompass financial irregularity concerning senior staff, the Head of School, Deputy Headteacher and the Business Manager, therefore this additional Whistle Blowing Policy is to provide recommendations in the event that you think that there is an issue with regards to any of these staff; the procedure is set out below: (For the purpose of this document financial dealings would also include resources).

1. You could discuss your concerns with other member(s) of the leadership group, or if you suspect they are included in the irregularity then contact the Chair of Governors or the EFA.
2. If your concerns are not answered satisfactorily then you must contact the Chair of Governors. Alternatively the Vice Chair of Governors.
3. Alternatively, and perhaps the better route would be to contact the Chair of Governors directly. Alternatively the Vice Chair of Governors.
4. If you suspect the Chair of Governors is included in the irregularity, then please contact the ESFA using their online form (www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy)