



## **Whistleblowing Policy**

# **Godinton Primary School**

**September 2016**

**Approved by the Governing Body Strategy Group 21/09/16**

**This Policy is due for renewal in Term 6 2018-2019**

Godinton Academy Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales with company number 9404783. The registered office is at Lockholt Close, Ashford, TN23 3JR.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**N.B: The word whistleblowing in this Policy refers to the disclosure by workers of malpractice, either internally or externally, as well as illegal acts or omissions at work.**

### **Introduction**

Godinton Primary School is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with this commitment, the school encourages employees with serious concerns about the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns. This also applies to concerns about the activities of staff, governors and external organisations in their dealings with the school.

This policy:-

- provides the basis on which employees can raise any such concerns they may have, and receive feedback on action taken;
- allows employees to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the school's response;
- gives protection from reprisals or victimisation for 'whistle blowing' in good faith.

### **The Policy**

There are existing procedures in place to enable employees to raise grievances about their own employment. This policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of individual grievances. The concern may be about something that:-

- is unlawful;
- is against the school's policies;
- amounts to improper conduct;
- seems likely to harm somebody or the environment; or
- represents a cover-up of these sorts of issues.

This policy applies to all employees.

### **Safeguards**

### **Harassment or victimisation**

The Governing Body recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisals from those responsible for the malpractice. The school will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take all possible measures to protect employees who raise concerns in good faith.

### **Confidentiality**

The school will protect the identity of employees who raise concerns and do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated, however, that the investigation may reveal the source of the information, and statements made by the employees who raised the issue may be required as part of the evidence. The school encourages employees to put their name to allegations made. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the school. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:-

- the seriousness of the issue raised;
- the credibility of the concern;
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources;
- untrue allegations.

If an allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. However, if employees make allegations that are malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action against them is likely.

### **How to raise a concern**

The earlier employees express their concern, the easier it is to take action. As a first step an employee should raise any concerns with their line manager or the Headteacher. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice.

Concerns are better raised in writing. This should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why the employee is concerned about the situation. An employee who does not feel able to put their concerns in writing can telephone or meet the appropriate manager. Employees may invite their trade union or professional association to raise the matter in conjunction with them.

### **How will the School respond?**

The action taken by the school will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised, may for example, be investigated internally or be referred to the Police. In order to protect individuals and the school, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. Within two weeks of a concern being received, the employee who raised the issue will receive written acknowledgement:-

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

The amount of contact between the investigators considering the issue and the employee who has raised the issue will depend on the nature of the matter raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from the employee.

When any meeting is arranged with the employee, they will be given the right to be accompanied by a representative or fellow worker who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates. The school accepts that employees need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Therefore, subject to legal or contractual constraints, employees will receive information about the outcomes of any investigations.

### **Taking the issue further**

This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue to raise relevant concerns within the school. It is hoped that employees will be satisfied with the action taken as a result.

If an employee is not satisfied and feels it is right to take the matter outside the school, the following are possible contact points:-

- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations or
- the police.

If an employee does take the matter outside of school, they must make sure that they do not disclose otherwise confidential information.

### **Bribery Act 2010**

Godinton Academy Trust has a zero tolerance approach to acts of bribery and corruption. Any instances of suspected bribery and corruption must be reported. If you do not feel able to report your concerns to your line manager, the Whistle Blowing Procedure can be used to confidentially raise this matter.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **EXAMPLES OF CONCERNS**

This list illustrates the kind of issues the School would consider as malpractice or wrongdoing that could be raised under this whistleblowing policy. This list is not exhaustive.

- Poor or unprofessional practice by a member of staff, governor or an agency which results in the service user not getting the same quality of service which is available to others;
- Improper/unacceptable behaviour towards a service user which could take the form of emotional, sexual or verbal abuse, rough handling, oppressive or discriminatory behaviour or exploitative acts for material or sexual gain;
- Any unlawful activities, whether criminal or in breach of civil law;
- Fraud, theft or corruption;
- Concerns regarding possible breaches of Health and Safety Regulations;
- Harassment, discrimination, victimisation or bullying of employees and/or service users;
- Leaking confidential information in respect of Governing Body or Trust activities and/or records;
- Undertaking of undisclosed private work which may conflict with duties and responsibilities, or which are being carried out during work time;
- Inappropriate contact with members of the public within council or school facilities, or whilst carrying out governing body duties and/or Council duties or outside working time;
- Taking gifts or inducements;
- Inappropriate use of external funding or school budget;
- Maladministration as defined by the Local Government Ombudsman;
- Breach of any Statutory Code of Practice;
- Breach or failure to implement or comply with any Governing Body policy;
- Misuse of school assets, including computer hardware and software and buildings