

THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL GROUP LTD

Whistle-blowing Policy

(In line with the TAS employee handbook)



| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Author: | KP |
| Date: | Sept 24 |
| To be reviewed: | Sept 25 |
| Reviewed: | Jun '14, Sept '15, Sept '16, Feb '17, Apr '19, Nov '19, April 21, Sept 21, Feb 22, Sept 22, May 23, Sept 24 |
| Version: | 10 |

WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY

Introduction

All organisations face the risk of things going wrong or of unknowingly harbouring poor practice. The school believes it has a duty to identify such situations and take the appropriate measures to remedy them. By encouraging a culture of openness and safety, raising concerns, valuing staff and reflecting on practice within our organisation the school believes it can help prevent violations of our expectations. Furthermore, by knowing about malpractice at an early stage the school stands a good chance of taking the necessary steps to safeguard the interests of all staff and pupils and protect the organisation. In short, the school encourages you to 'blow the whistle' on suspected malpractice.

Please be aware that this policy is not the procedure for general grievances. If you have a complaint about your own personal circumstances, then you should use the normal grievance procedure. If you have concerns about staff behaviour within the school, you should use the procedure outlined in this policy. It is our aim to have transparency and accountability in relation to how concerns are received and handled.

This policy has been written with regard to current KCSIE

Suspected malpractice

The school encourages you to report suspected malpractice in relation to our activities. This could include:

- any illegal and/or criminal activity at the school;
- **This includes low level concerns (see posters and link on our website for reporting anonymously)**
- any activity that causes the school to breach its legal obligations;
- any activity that causes the school to endanger the health and safety of any person;
- any activity that damages the environment;
- any attempt to wilfully conceal any information that tends to show malpractice;
- breach of the school's internal policies and procedures, including its Code of Conduct;
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- Negligence;
- Financial fraud or mismanagement;
- Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- Poor or unsafe practice including failures in our safeguarding regime
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

You are not required to obtain evidence of malpractice before raising your concern. As such you must not commit an act or acts of misconduct, breach school rules or damage the school in any way in order to obtain information. The school is committed to ensuring that you work in an environment in which you can raise concerns and there is no question of you having to prove anything. The school will support employees,

who with the reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to do so raise concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken. All staff (including temporary) and volunteers will be trained during induction about whistle-blowing procedures.

How to raise your concern internally

You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken. You should report your concern to your Headteacher in the first instance, but you can also raise with HR or the Executive Head or a different Headteacher if you feel more comfortable. The important thing is to RAISE the concern with a senior member of staff.

If you feel that you cannot do this for whatever reason, then please look for the Reporting Low Level Concerns Posters that we have placed in staff toilets to help you report anonymously. We have also added the link to our website.

You should first contact the relevant person and discuss your concern by phone or face to face. You will be asked to follow this up by putting your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates and places where you can. A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of the allegation but will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.

Proprietor/Executive Head:
kirsty@thealternativeschool.co.uk
07717 525 306

People Operations – Louise Beswick-Brown –
peopleoperations@thealternativeschool.co.uk

LADO contacts -

Angela Phillipson
Tim Booth
Shane Penn
Megan Dumpleton
Donna Green

Megan.dumpleton@blackburn.gov.uk

Lado@blackpool.gov.uk

Tim.booth@lancashire.gov.uk

Shane.Penn@lancashire.gov.uk

Donna.Green@lancashire.gov.uk

01254 585184 - Blackburn
01253 477541 - Blackpool
01772 536694 – Lancashire

How the School will respond

After you have raised your concern the school will decide how to respond in a responsible and appropriate manner under this policy. Usually, this will involve making internal enquiries first, but it may be necessary to carry out an investigation at a later stage, which may be formal or informal depending on the nature of the concern raised.

As far as possible, the school will keep you informed of the decisions taken and the outcome of any enquiries and investigations carried out. However, the school will not be able to inform you of any matters that would infringe the duty of confidentiality owed to others.

Allegations made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain will be seen in a different light and disciplinary action may be taken.

Safeguarding:

If a member of staff suspects that there is a serious safeguarding issue that they feel that the Headteacher is not taking seriously or that they believe there is a serious safeguarding issue involving the Headteacher they should in the first instance contact the Lead DSLs or Proprietor, Kirsty-Anne Pugh.

Raising your concern externally

The main purpose of this policy is to give you the opportunity and protection you need to raise your concerns internally. The school would expect that in almost all cases raising concerns internally would be the most appropriate action for you to take.

If you have good reasons for not using the internal or regulatory disclosure procedures described above, you may consider making wider disclosure by reporting the matter to the police for example. However, whistle-blowers who make wider disclosures of this type will only be protected in certain circumstances. The school recommends that you take legal advice before following this course of action since we believe it will be in your own interests to do so.

The NSPCC whistle-blowing helpline is available for staff members who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally: 0800 028 0285.

Protection for whistleblowers

You may be worried that by reporting your concerns you will be opening yourself up to victimisation or detriment or risking your job security. However, all staff benefit from statutory protection if they raise concerns in the right way and do so with the reasonable belief that raising the concern is in the public interest. This protection

means that employees must not be dismissed or suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Support will be offered, where appropriate, and provision for mediation and dispute resolution where necessary. As it will be in your own interests to do so we would encourage you in particular to ensure you have a reasonable belief that the disclosure you wish to make is in the public interest as this is one of the requirements that must be met in order to obtain the statutory protection mentioned earlier.

Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistle-blowers in any way. This will be regarded as gross misconduct and may result in those involved being dismissed without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

If you believe that you have suffered any detrimental treatment, you should inform the Proprietor immediately. If the matter is not remedied, you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.

Further advice and support

It is recognised that whistle blowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from your line manager, HR department and/or your professional trade union.