



# Coton-in-the-Elms Primary School

## Confidential Reporting Code (Whistleblowing)

| Version | Last review | Reviewed by:                     | Next review | Comments                 |
|---------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| 2       | March 2023  | Stephanie Marbrow/ Lisa McIntosh | March 2025  | New format and refreshed |
| 3       | Jan 25      | Stephanie Marbrow                | Jan 27      | Refreshed. No changes    |
|         |             |                                  |             |                          |

*Perseverance      Enjoyment      Awe and Wonder      Compassion      Excellence*

| <b>Contents</b>                             | <b>Page</b> |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Do's and Don'ts chart</b>                | <b>3</b>    |
| <b>1. Introduction</b>                      | <b>4</b>    |
| <b>2. Purpose</b>                           | <b>4</b>    |
| <b>3. Scope</b>                             | <b>5</b>    |
| <b>4. Procedure for making a disclosure</b> | <b>6</b>    |

**If you are thinking of raising a concern, here are a few things to remember:**

| <b>Yes: please do ...</b>  | <b>No: Please do not</b>  |
|--|---|
| Raise the matter as soon as possible   | Do nothing. The school would prefer you to speak up   |
| Speak to someone with the authority to deal with your concerns.                                      | Be afraid of raising your concerns. The school has safeguards in place to protect staff   |
| Be assured the school will take seriously concerns raised based on honest and reasonable suspicions. | Try to investigate yourself. This may complicate any later enquiries, particularly if a criminal investigation becomes necessary. |
| Familiarise yourself with this procedure.  | Approach or accuse any individuals directly   |
| Consider writing down the key points and details as to why you are concerned.                        | Tell your suspicions or concerns to anyone other than those with the proper authority.  |

If you receive a concern as a line manager/Headteacher:

| <b>Yes: Please do</b>  | <b>NO: Please do not</b>   |
|--|--|
| Be fully responsive to staff concerns  | Ridicule or ignore the concerns raised   |
| Respect the fact that staff can raise a concern confidentially.  | Approach or accuse any individuals directly  |
| Take detailed notes of the information provided:- who, what, where, when, why and how in relation to the concern | Tell your suspicions or concerns to anyone other than those with the proper authority  |
| Evaluate the allegation objectively  | Try to investigate the matter yourself. This may complicate any later enquiries, particularly if a criminal investigation becomes necessary. |
| Advise the appropriate person at DCC   | Do nothing. The school is committed to a culture of openness.  |
| Deal with the matter promptly and as a matter of priority  | Delay: The speed of response may be critical.  |

# 1. Introduction

## Summary of Main Points:

- This code provides a procedure whereby possible malpractice can be disclosed in confidence and without prejudice or retribution (known as Whistleblowing).
- This procedure applies to all employees.
- The procedure outlines actions employers and the school should take when making and responding to any disclosure.
- This Code has been discussed and agreed with the recognised Trade Unions and Professional Associations.

**1.1** Confidential reporting is the disclosure or communication of information about possible malpractice by individuals or organisations. Disclosure can be either internal within the organisation or external to an outside authority.

**1.2** This Code is intended to enable employees to disclose information about malpractice internally and to provide employees with the protection from subsequent victimisation, discrimination or disadvantage. This will assist in detecting and deterring malpractice and, by demonstrating the School's accountability, maintain public confidence and the school's good reputation.

# 2. Purpose

**2.1** Employees are often the first to realise that there may be evidence of malpractice within the School. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the school. They may also fear harassment or victimisation.

**2.2** In line with the school's commitment to high standards of openness, integrity and accountability, the school expects employees who have a reasonable belief that malpractice is taking place within the school to come forward and voice their concerns internally. This may be an awareness of suspected irregularity, wrongdoing or a failure of standards. This Code provides the means for employees to make such disclosures.

**2.3** An employee's concerns about malpractice may include a reasonable belief that one or more of the following has occurred or is likely to occur:

- Conduct which is an offence or breach of the law,
- Miscarriages of justice,
- Health and Safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees,
- Damage to the environment,
- The unauthorised use of public funds,
- Fraud and corruption,

- Sexual or Physical abuse of pupils,
  - Other unethical conduct
- 2.4** Under the Code employees should make disclosures about possible malpractice to:
- The Head Teacher,
  - Where this is inappropriate to the Chair of Governors,
  - Where both of these are inappropriate, the Director of Children's Services or the Assistant Director of Finance (Adult Services)

It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

- 2.5** It is in the interests of all parties that disclosures are dealt with properly, quickly and discreetly. The overriding consideration for the school and the employee is that it would be in the public interest for any malpractice found to be corrected and, where appropriate, sanctions applied.
- 2.6** The Code provides employees with a procedure to make disclosures of irregularity or wrongdoing without fear of adverse treatment as a result. The school will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of employees making disclosures (including informal pressures) and will take action to protect employees when they make a disclosure in good faith.
- 2.7** The Code addresses major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures and where the interests of others or of the school are at risk. It has been developed within the following legislative and policy framework:

It takes into account the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

It is complimentary to the schools Code of Conduct for Teachers and Teaching Assistants which makes clear the standards of propriety and good practice expected of employees.

It is complimentary to the school's Discipline, Grievance and Harassment Procedures. Together they form the framework which allows employees to be disciplined, to seek personal redress, to raise personal complaint and to disclose malpractice where appropriate.

This code is in addition to the school's Complaints Procedures and other reporting procedures, for example Safeguarding/Child Protection procedures.

### **3 Scope**

- 3.1** This Code applies to all employees in the school. It is also applicable to:
- Contractors working for the school on school premises e.g., agency staff, builders.
  - Suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the school in their own premises.

## **4 Procedure for Making a Disclosure**

### **4.1 Introduction**

**4.1.1** This Code provides you with a procedure for making disclosures internally about suspected wrongdoing, irregularity or a failure of standards within the School. It aims to:

- To encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about possible malpractice within the School.
- To provide a means for you to disclose those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken.
- To ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them further if you are not satisfied.
- To reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation and from subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.

**4.1.2** Any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of employees or Governors of the school or others acting on behalf of the School can be reported under this Code. This may be about something that:

- Makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe the school subscribes to.
- It is against the school's policies
- Falls below established standards of practice
- Amounts to improper conduct

Examples of these are given in paragraph 2.3

### **4.2 Confidentiality**

All disclosures will be treated in confidence and wherever possible, every effort will be made not to reveal your identity. However, you may need to come forward as a witness and you will be given every support from management at that time.

### **4.3 Anonymous Disclosures**

**4.3.1** You should put your name to your disclosure whenever possible. Disclosures made anonymously will still be considered at the discretion of the school. However, it may be helpful to have your name in case further information is required.

**4.3.2** In exercising its discretion, the school will take into account:

- The seriousness of the issues raised.
- The credibility of the disclosure.
- The likelihood of confirming what is alleged from attributable sources.

### **4.4 Untrue Disclosures**

If you make a disclosure in good faith that you reasonably believe is in the public interest, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If however, your allegation is frivolous, malicious or for personal gain, you may be subject to disciplinary action.

## **4.5 Employee Action**

**4.5.1** As a first step, you should normally raise your concerns with the Head Teacher. If you believe the Head Teacher is involved, you should approach the Chair of Governors. This depends however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. If you believe the Headteacher and Chair of Governors are involved, you should approach the Director of Children's Services or, if the concern is regarding financial irregularities or fraud then you should contact the Assistant Director of Finance (Audit), Derbyshire County Council.

**4.5.2** You may raise your concern either verbally or in writing. The earlier you express the concern, the easier it is to take action. You should provide:

- Details of your concerns, including the nature, dates and location of any relevant incidents.
- Reasons why you feel concerned about the situation.

**4.5.3** Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

**4.5.4** You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first and you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns. You may also discuss your concerns with your Trade Union representative.

**4.5.5** You may invite your Trade Union representative or other representative to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised.

**4.5.6** The amount of contact between you and the person considering the issues will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the School will seek further information from you.

## **4.6 Action taken by the school**

**4.6.1** The school will respond to your disclosure. Where appropriate the matters raised may be:

- Investigated by management, by internal audit, or through the disciplinary process.
- Referred to the Police.
- Referred to an external auditor.
- The subject of an independent inquiry.

**4.6.2** In order to protect individuals and those accused of possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The over-riding principle the school will have in mind is the public interest. Disclosures for which there are other specific procedures ( for example Safeguarding/Child Protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

**4.6.3** Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any action investigation is concluded.

**4.6.4** Within 10 working days of a concern being raised, you will receive a response:

- a) Acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- b) Telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made;
- c) Indication of how the matter is going to be dealt with;
- d) Giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- e) Supplying you with the information on staff support mechanisms;
- f) Telling you why if there is to be no further investigation.

**4.6.5** The school will take steps to minimise any difficulties you may experience as a result of making a disclosure. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the School will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.

**4.6.6** You will need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, you will be informed of the outcomes of the investigation.

#### **4.7 How the matter can be taken further**

**4.7.1** This Code is intended to provide you with a route within the School to make disclosures of malpractice. The school hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not, and you believe the information you have disclosed is substantially true, possible contact points are:

- Public Concern at Work
- The external auditor
- Your Trade Union
- Your local Citizens Advice Bureau
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- A relevant voluntary organisation
- The Police

**4.7.2** If you do take the matter outside of the school, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information. Check with the person dealing with your disclosure within School before divulging any information.