Skelton School

Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy

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1 About this policy

1.1 The Council and Skelton School are committed to the highest standards of honesty, integrity and accountability in carrying out its functions. All staff are expected to maintain high standards. Any suspected wrongdoing should be reported as soon as possible.

1.2 This policy covers all employees, officers, consultants, contractors, casual workers and agency workers and explains the protection and support that is available for 'whistleblowers'.

1.3 Any prospective 'whistleblower' can seek support from their Trade Union either before raising a concern or at any time during a concern being considered under this policy.

1.4 The Audit Committee is responsible for approving and monitoring the Council's policy in relation to confidential reporting (whistleblowing). An annual report will be provided to the Audit Committee on the operation of the policy.

2 What is whistleblowing?

2.1 Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to any activities that the Council or Skelton School is engaged in. It covers the following specific wrongdoing/practices:

- a criminal offence
- breach of any legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- danger to the health and safety of any individual
- damage to the environment
- the deliberate concealment of information about any of the above.

2.2 Whistleblowing is for disclosures that are in the public interest, it is not to be used for raising complaints relating to an employee's own personal circumstances or treatment at work. In those cases, employees should use the grievance procedure or other appropriate Human Resources procedure.

3 How to raise a concern

3.1 A whistleblowing concern should be raised with your Headteacher or if this is not possible, your Chair of Governors. You must advise the person you report to that you are making a disclosure under the Council's Whistleblowing Policy. A record of all whistleblowing concerns is maintained by the Monitoring Officer.

3.2 The person receiving your referral must notify the Monitoring Officer and will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a companion (eg work colleague or union representative) to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation. The concern will then be investigated under this policy.

4 Confidentiality

4.1 We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. Completely anonymous disclosures are often very difficult to investigate. If you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating your concern or if required for legal reasons.

5 External disclosures

5.1 The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

5.2 The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. "Protect" operates an independent and confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

6 Protection and support for whistleblowers

6.1 The Council and Skelton School aims to encourage openness and will support whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

6.2 Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Assistant Director HR/OD or Monitoring Officer immediately.

6.3 You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct, you may be subject to disciplinary action.

6.4 If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken against you. However, if you make a false allegation maliciously, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

6.5 "Protect" operates a confidential helpline providing support and advice. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

7 A collective responsibility to report concerns

7.1 There is a responsibility for all officers to notify and report any issues of serious concern. Failure to do so may have a negative impact on the delivery of council services, negatively impact on the Council's reputation or impact on the conduct of an individual. As a result, failure to declare or report such concern could be considered a disciplinary matter.

8 Contacts

Monitoring Officer	Linda Jones, Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer

	Telephone: 01768 212280 Email: linda.jones@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk
Section 151 (Chief Finance) Officer	Pam Duke, Director of Resources Telephone: 07989 345265 Email: pam.duke@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk
Head of Internal Audit	Richard McGahon Telephone: 07917 837416 Email: richard.mcgahon@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk
Protect (Independent whistleblowing charity, formerly "public concern at work")	Helpline: (020) 3117 2520 Email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk Website: www.protect-advice.org.uk
Headteacher	**head@skelton.cumbria.sch.uk**
Chair of Governors	**daniel@skelton.cumbria.sch.uk**

9 Review of this policy

9.1 This Policy will be subject to review every three years by the council, and annually by the board of Governors.