



Cookstown High School

Whistleblowing Policy & Procedures

Reviewed: February 2024

Next Review: February 2027

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POLICY OVERVIEW

DETAILS

TITLE	Whistleblowing Policy & Procedures
TARGET AUDIENCE	Governors', Staff, Parents/Guardians
REVIEW DATE	February 2024
REVIEW LEAD	Principal
POLICY DEVELOPED BY	Senior Leadership Team
POLICY RATIFIED BY THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS ON:	February 2024
EFFECTIVE FROM:	February 2024
REVIEW FREQUENCY:	Every three years (minimum)
REVIEW DATE:	February 2027
PRINCIPAL	Miss G J Evans
CHAIR OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS	Mrs L Dripps

This procedure has been reviewed to include reference to the remit of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) in investigating complaints from members of the public in relation to maladministration in publicly funded schools.

RECORD OF POLICY AMENDMENTS

The following table outlines any significant changes/amendments made to this procedure since it was ratified by the Board of Governors on:

DATE OF REVIEW OR AMENDMENT	SUMMARY OF CHANGED / AMENDMENTS TO PROCEDURE	AMENDED BY

Ethos and Rationale

Cookstown High School has a Christian ethos which lays emphasis on the respect for each individual and the importance of personal responsibility for conduct. This policy should be read, interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the School Ethos.

The School believes that it is important that staff are able, with confidence, to raise internally, legitimate concerns about fraud, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, failure to comply with legal obligations or unethical conduct. This policy and the accompanying procedures also provide for such concerns to be raised, if necessary, with authorities outside School.

In accordance with Lord Nolan's Second Report on Standards in Public Life Cookstown High School intends to demonstrate that it:

- Will not tolerate malpractice
- Will respect the confidentiality of staff who raise concerns and will seek to provide procedures which will maintain confidentiality so far as is consistent with effective management of concerns and legal obligations
- Will provide procedures to report concerns out with the normal line management structure where this is appropriate or expedient
- Will reserve the right to use the Disciplinary Procedure in the case of malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations
- Will provide a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns which is accessible to all members of staff

Definition

Malpractice is not easily defined but may be regarded as including allegations of fraud, financial irregularities, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, acting contrary to accepted ethical behaviour, criminal activities or failing to comply with a legal obligation, a miscarriage of justice, or creating or ignoring a serious risk to health, safety or the environment.

Confidentially

Members of staff who raise concerns under this policy and its procedures are entitled to expect confidentiality and that their name will not be revealed to the alleged perpetrator of malpractice without their prior, express permission. In cases where criminality is involved, discovered or suspected then the matter will be handed to the police. In such cases the School may not be able to sustain confidentiality. There may be cases when to maintain confidentiality concerns are raised orally rather than in writing, however, colleagues are encouraged to submit concerns in written form to ensure clarity and accuracy.

Procedure

This procedure is separate from the grievance procedure or the child protection procedure. In cases of concern about child protection the appropriate procedure must be used immediately. The grievance procedure may be used to raise concerns about an individual's personal employment situation.

- Colleagues may bring concerns under this policy to the Principal, a Vice Principal or the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

- If the concern is about the Principal the matter may be brought to the Chairman of the Board of Governors directly.
- The concern should be submitted in written form and not anonymously.
- In cases where there are concerns about confidentiality the concern may be submitted verbally.
- The concern will be brought to the attention of the most senior member of staff appropriate.
- The Principal or Chairman of the Board of Governors may delegate a deputy to conduct an investigation and submit a report to them.
- The member of staff making the allegation will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.
- Appropriate corrective action will be taken in line with existing policies, guidelines, professional ethics and procedures.
- Subject to third party rights the member of staff making the allegation will be kept informed of the outcome.
- A member of staff who is unhappy with the outcome may raise the matter with the Chairman of the Board of Governors or, if that has already been done, with the NIPSO.

External Reporting

Where the internal procedure has been exhausted and the complainant is not satisfied that the matter has been resolved they may report the concern to the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman (NIPSO). The NIPSO may be contacted at:

NIPSO

**Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN
Tel: 02890 233821**

There are some cases where under the terms of the Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 a member of staff may wish to raise the issue directly with an appropriate outside agency if they believe that:

- Exceptionally serious circumstances justify that
- They would be subjected to a detriment by their employer
- It is likely that evidence relating to the relevant failure will be concealed or destroyed if they make the disclosure to School

Malicious, Vexatious or Frivolous Accusations

Such allegations will be dealt with under the appropriate Disciplinary Procedure.

Protection from Reprisal or Victimisation

No member of staff will suffer a detriment or be disciplined for raising a genuine and legitimate concern providing they do so in good faith and follow the procedures outlined in this policy.

Linked Documents

Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
Concerns & Complaints Policy

Disciplinary Procedure for Teachers including Principals and Vice Principals in Grant Aided Schools with Fully Delegated Budgets
Disciplinary Procedure for Non-Teaching Staff in Grant Aided Schools with Fully Delegated Budgets
Grievance Procedure
Staff Handbook