



QUORN HALL
SCHOOL

Whistle Blowing Policy

Person Responsible: Headteacher

Last reviewed on: September 2020

Next review due by: September 2022

Created: July 2011 (Gretton)

Revisions: Bi-Annually

Quorn Hall School is owned and operated by Cavendish Education; the Proprietary Body also known as the Governing Body. Any reference to Governors means any Director of Cavendish Education.

This Policy document is one of a series of Quorn Hall School Policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive, formal Statement of Quorn Hall School's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each and every one of its students and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this Policy needs to be read alongside all of these Policies and the Staff Handbook in order to get the full picture; in particular it should be read in conjunction with the ***Equality Policy, the Allegations against Staff Policy, the Health and Safety Policy (as well as information on Peninsula Business Safe) and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.***

All of these Policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to evidence the work that the whole School is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values.

In all Quorn Hall School policies, unless the context requires otherwise, the word "parent" imports the meaning parent, guardian, carer or any other person in whom is vested the legal duties and responsibilities of a child's primary caregiver.

Quorn Hall School employs the services of the following consulting companies to ensure compliance is met and best practice is implemented;—

Peninsula HR Online
Peninsula Business Safe (Health and Safety)
DDC (DBS)
Educare (online CPD)

This Policy and the Procedures applies to all staff, including senior managers, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, pupils and anyone working on behalf of Quorn Hall School, pupils/carers, external agencies and members of the public.

Whistleblowing is when a worker reports suspected wrong-doing at work. Wrong-doing covered by this 'public interest disclosure' includes:

- someone's health and safety is in danger;
- damage to the environment;
- a criminal offence;

- not obeying the law;
- covering up wrong-doing;
- misusing public funds; (and in schools)
- actions that negatively affect the welfare of children.

Where staff have concerns they should aim to report it internally first before using an external ‘prescribed person or body’. Making a report to an external person may only be undertaken where the staff member thinks the school will cover it up, would treat them unfairly if they complained or have raised the matter before, but the concern hasn’t been dealt with.

External bodies are:

- Local Authority
- Union or Professional Association
- Prescribed Person or Body (e.g. Ofsted, Education Funding Agency, Children’s Commissioner or NSPCC)
- alternatively contact the whistleblowing charity, ‘Public Concern At Work’ www.pcaw.org.uk

Staff must acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior management and/or relevant agencies. Although this can be difficult this is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express your concerns:

- out of a feeling that this would be disloyal to colleagues; or because
- you may fear harassment or victimisation.

These feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember it is often the most vulnerable children or young person who is targeted. These children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare.

Don't think what if I'm wrong – think what if I'm right

Reasons for whistleblowing

Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour

- To prevent the problem worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself

What stops people from whistleblowing

- Starting a chain of events which spirals
- Disrupting the work or project

- Fear of getting it wrong
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers
- Fear of not being believed

How to raise a concern

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. The earlier concern is expressed the easier and sooner it is possible for action to be taken
- Try to pinpoint what practice is concerning you and why
- Approach someone you trust and who you will believe will respond
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don't let matters rest
- Ideally you should put your concerns in writing
- A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT OFTEN IT IS THE MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS THAT ARE TARGETED BY INDIVIDUALS WHO MAY SEEK TO ABUSE THOSE IN THEIR CARE. THEREFORE, THESE GROUPS RELY ON RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO PROTECT THEM AND TO SAFEGUARD THEIR WELFARE

What happens next?

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries
- Your employer has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and is raised in good faith
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence

Self-reporting

Staff have a responsibility to report any relevant changes of circumstances to their employer. These include any criminal investigations, convictions or warnings they may become the subject of and/or if their own children become involved in any child protection related concern.

There also may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, maybe a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their line manager so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

**Since Working Together (2015) applies to all schools, this means all schools must have a Whistle Blowing Policy. The principles of the Francis Report are outlined in the next section.*

Freedom to Speak Up Report – Sir Robert Francis

In February 2015, the Freedom to Speak Up report was published. This report written by Sir Robert Francis QC looked at how incidents of poor care practice in the National Health Service could be prevented. Sir Robert found that NHS staff found it difficult to report their concerns and could be penalised for doing so.

Whilst the Freedom to Speak Up report is written primarily about the NHS, Sir Robert's findings have been applied in other fields, including those organisations covered by Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015).

Sir Robert Francis's Freedom to Speak Up review report can be found at:freedomtospeakup.org.uk

Principles of Whistleblowing

The principles in the report are grouped into five themes which are set out below.

Working Together to Safeguard Children is expecting these principles to be particularly evident in the safeguarding systems in schools and colleges. The aspects set out in Theme 1, will fit appropriately into the ethos and values section of a school's policies, not only safeguarding.

Theme 2 should be included in the policy section that describes how concerns will be dealt with, particularly the need for prompt investigation.

In schools, Theme 3 will emphasise training and communication so that staff understand what the Whistle Blowing Policy is there for and what concerns are covered. Where a school has a strongly hierarchical approach, a 'Freedom To Speak Up' Guardian may ensure that all staff feel that they have someone to speak to without approaching a senior manager.

Theme 4 develops the idea of ensuring that no-one feels unable to raise concerns, but recognises that some staff may feel they will not be listened to. Schools should also recognise that temporary staff, part-time staff, volunteers and students may find it harder to raise their concerns. Theme 5, changes to legislation, refers only to the NHS.

Principles of Whistleblowing

Theme 1 – the need for culture change

- culture of safety and learning
- raising concerns
- culture free from bullying

- culture of visible leadership
- value staff who raise concerns
- culture of reflective practice

Theme 2 – the need for improved handling of cases

- informal and formal raising and resolution of concerns,
- prompt, swift, proportionate, and blame free investigation
- mediation and dispute resolution

Theme 3 – the need for measures to support good practice

- support to those raising concerns
- introduction of a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
- provision of support is recommended to those who have difficulty finding employment in the NHS after making a protected disclosure
- training for every member of staff about raising concerns and handling them
- transparency accountable
- external review
- regulatory action
- NHS organisations that successfully support good practice should be recognised by way of their CQC assessment or by some other means

Theme 4 – the need for particular measures for vulnerable groups

- locums and agency and bank staff should have access to the same support and procedures as permanent staff,
- black and minority ethnic backgrounds who raise concerns might need action over and above what is in the report to support and protect them
- students and trainees should also be subject to all the principles
- primary care, standards for empowering and protecting staff to enable them to raise concerns freely

Theme 5 – the need to extend the legal protection to NHS staff currently provided by the relevant legislation

Further Information

Freedom to Speak Up Report:

freedomtospeakup.org.uk

Whistleblowing procedure for maintained schools

www.gov.uk/whistleblowing-procedure-for-maintained-schools

Whistleblowing

www.gov.uk/whistleblowing

Whistleblowing to Ofsted about safeguarding in local authority children's services (April 2014) www.safeguardingschools.co.uk/ofstedwhistleblowing

Whistleblowing Reports to the PCAW in 2013 www.safeguardingschools.co.uk/pcaw2013

Further advice and support

It is recognised that whistleblowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from your line manager or the Headteacher and/or your professional or trade union.

"Absolutely without fail – challenge poor practice or performance. If you ignore or collude with poor practice it makes it harder to sound the alarm when things go wrong". With acknowledgement to Sounding the Alarm – Barnardos

It is vital to read this policy in conjunction with the Allegations against Staff Policy and that staff adhere to this in the case of allegations against staff.

For further information see 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019, part four'