Eastcroft Park Primary School

Whistle Blowing Policy

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HUMAN RESOURCE POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

SECTION:	**3**	Employment Practices	**REFERENCE:**
SUBJECT:		Confidential Reporting Procedure (Whistle Blowing)	**DATE:**

APPLICABLE TO:	All school employees
STATUS:	Policy/Procedure
SOURCE:	School Governing Body

1. PREAMBLE

1.1 This School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In accordance with that commitment we expect employees and others with whom we deal, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the School's work to come forward and voice those concerns.

1.2 This Procedure document makes it clear that employees can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. The Procedure seeks to enable employees to raise serious concerns within the School rather than overlooking a concern or raising that concern out the School.

1.3 The Procedure applies to all employees and those contractors working for the School on School premises, for example, agency staff, builders and drivers. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the School in their own premises, for example, care homes.

1.4 The Procedure is in addition to the School's complaints procedures and other relevant statutory reporting procedures applying to certain Departments. The Procedure is also designed to sit along the Schools' Anti-fraud policy statement which outlines the School's determination to combat fraud within the School and also to complement other procedures relating to irregularities or improper behaviour which occurs within the workplace.

2. AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE PROCEDURE

2.1 This Procedure aims to:

- allow employees to feel confident in raising serious concerns about issues relating to School practices and procedures
- provide avenues for employees to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- ensure that employees receive a response to concerns raised and that employees are aware of how to pursue those concerns further if necessary
- reassure employees that they will be protected from possible reprisal or victimisation if they have a reasonable belief that they have made any such disclosure in good faith.

2.2 There are existing procedures in place to enable employees to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment. The Confidential Reporting Procedure is intended to cover major concerns that fall out the scope of the grievance procedures. Such concerns include:

- conduct which breaches the School's standing orders and financial regulations
- conduct which is illegal
- disclosures relating to miscarriages of justice
- health and safety risks, include risks to the public as well as other employees
- damage to the environment
- sexual or physical abuse of clients, or
- other unethical conduct

2.3 Thus, any serious concerns that employees have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of employees or Members of the School or others acting on behalf of the School can be reported under the Confidential Reporting Procedure. This may be about something that:

- makes an employee feel uncomfortable in terms of generally acceptable standards, their own experience or the standards they believe the School subscribes to, or
- is contrary to the School's Standing Orders and policies, or
- falls below accepted standards of practice, or

- amounts to improper conduct.

2.4 This Procedure does not replace the School's complaints procedure, or any other School procedures.

3. SAFEGUARDS

3.1 The School recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. Thus the School will fully support any employee who reports, in good faith, any concerns that he/she has.

3.2 The School will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation [including informal pressures] of employees who report concerns and will take appropriate action to protect employees who raise a concern in good faith.

3.4 Any investigation into allegations made under this Procedure will not influence or be affected by any Disciplinary or Redundancy Procedures in relation to employees who raise concerns under this Procedure.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

4.1 All concerns will be dealt with in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of an employee who raises a concern.

4.2 If however a concern leads to disciplinary action against an employee who is accused of improper conduct, it may be necessary for any employee[s] who raised the concern to give evidence as a witness in disciplinary proceedings, or to provide information to an out body i.e., the Police.

5. ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

5.1 Concerns expressed anonymously may be conred at the discretion of the School. However employees are encouraged to put their name to any concerns raised to aid investigation of those concerns.

5.2 In exercising discretion in relation to anonymous allegations the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the allegation; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

6. UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

If an employee makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not substantiated by the investigation, no action will be taken against that employee. If, however, an employee makes an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against that employee.

7. THE PROCEDURE FOR RAISING CONCERNS

7.1 As a first step, employees should normally raise concerns in writing with their immediate Line Manager. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is involved. If employees feel unable to raise concerns with their own Line Manager the concern should be addressed to their Chief Officer. If the employee feels unable to do this, concerns should be expressed to the Governing Body, c/o Chair of Governors, School.

7.2 Advice/guidance on how to pursue matters of concern may be obtained from the Chair of Governors or Head Teacher of School.

7.3 Employees who wish to make a written report are encouraged to use the following format:

- the background and the nature of the concern [giving relevant dates];
- the reason why he/she is particularly concerned about the situation.

7.4 Although employees are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate to the Confidential Reporting Panel that there are reasonable grounds for concern.

7.5 Employees may wish to conr discussing concerns with a colleague and may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two [or more] people who have had the same or similar experience or concerns.

7.6 In summary therefore, concerns can be reported to the employees' line manager, Head Teacher, or the Governing Body of School who will deal with the complaint in accordance with section 8 below.

8. HOW THE SCHOOL WILL RESPOND

8.1 The School will respond to all concerns raised except those anonymous allegations where discretion is exercised not to do so as outlined in Paragraph 5.2 of this Procedure

8.2 If a concern is raised, initial enquiries will be made by the person(s) receiving the complaint, to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. The overriding principle is to act in the public interest.

8.3 Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures [for example, child protection, discrimination, or disciplinary issues] will normally be referred to the appropriate person(s) for conration under those procedures. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted. If it is decided that an investigation is required, this may be undertaken using the School's existing procedures and/or by involving the police and/or district audit.

8.4 Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the employee will be contacted by the appropriate officer:

- to acknowledge that the concern has been received
- to indicate how the School proposes to deals with the matter
- supplying information on staff support mechanisms, and
- stating whether further investigation will take place and if not,
- why not.

8.5 The level of contact between the persons investigating the concern and the employee[s] who raised the initial concern will depend on the nature of the concern, the potential difficulties involved and the complexity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from the employee[s] who raised the initial concerns.

8.6 Where any meeting is arranged, if he/she so wishes, the employee[s] who raised the initial concerns can be accompanied by a union or professional association representative or a friend.

8.7 This Procedure seeks to minimise any problems which may arise as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the employee will be given advice and guidance on the procedures.

8.8 The School accepts that employees need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Subject to legal constraints,

any employees who raise initial concerns will be informed of the outcome of any investigation

9. THE RESPONSIBLE BODY

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this Procedure, and will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcome of any investigation.

10. HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

10.1 This Procedure is intended to provide an avenue within the School to raise concerns. If employees are dissatisfied and feel it is right to take the matter out of the School, they have the right to do so. This should normally be done after the conclusion of the School's investigation into the employee[s] concerns.

This Procedure if properly applied should prevent the need for such action by employee[s].

10.2 If concerns are raised out the School by employees, they must endeavour to protect the confidentiality of matters relating to the School's business and its employees.

10.3 The School accepts that there may be circumstances where employees can properly report matters to out bodies e.g. The Police, The Health and Safety Executive etc. Provided that the employee has acted honestly and reasonably he/she will be protected from any Disciplinary Action arising from such disclosures. However, this Procedure has been devised to minimise the need for employees to report matters to out bodies or agencies. Employees must therefore be able to justify external disclosures.

Agreed by…

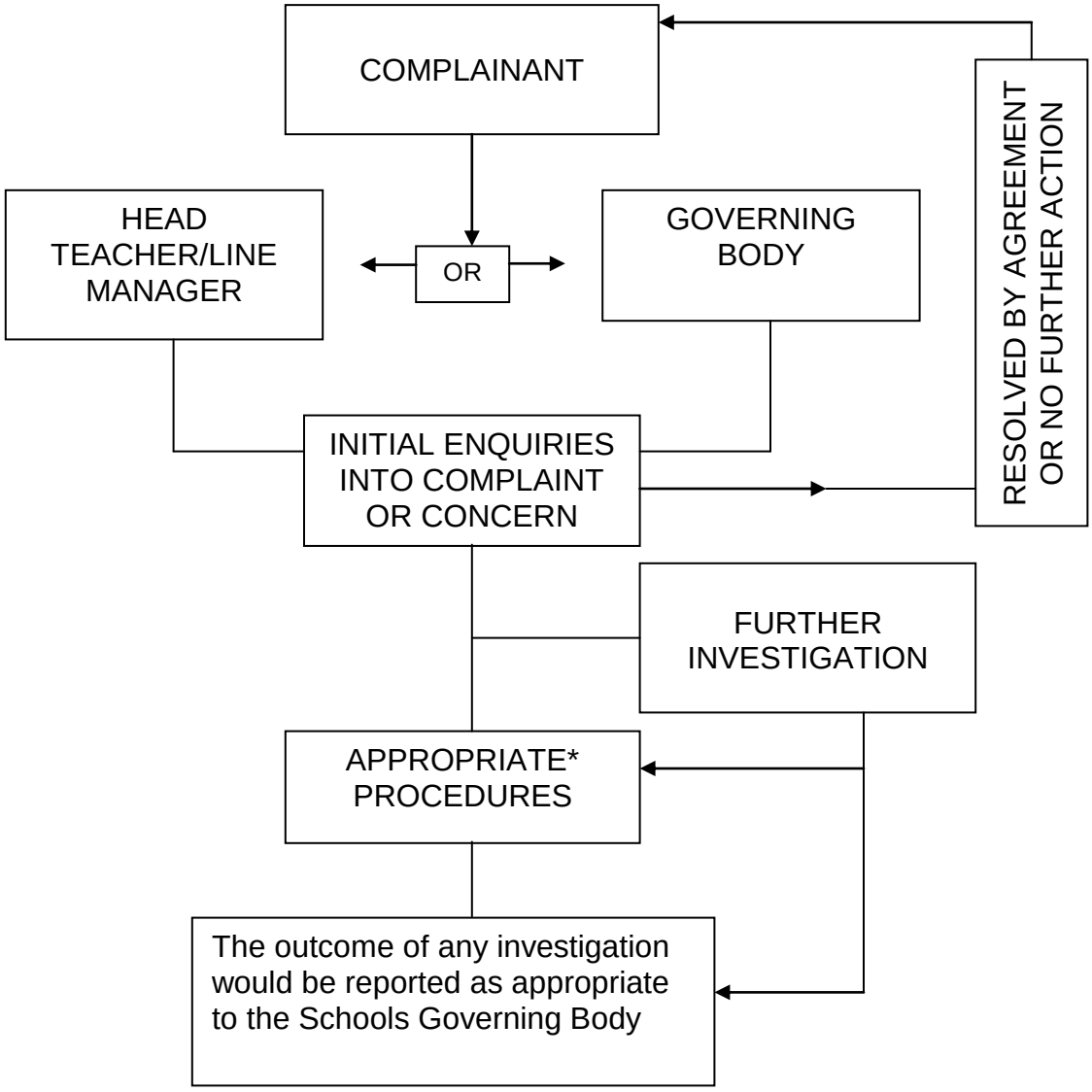
Finance Governors

Signed by……...Chair of Governors

Signed by……...Head Teacher

Eastcroft Park Primary School

CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING PROCEDURE



Governing Body:

Chair of Governors
Governing Body
Head Teacher
School Business Manager

*Appropriate Procedures:

HR Policies
Police
Financial Irregularities
District Audit