Ladygrove Primary School and Nursery

Telford & Wrekin Council Whistleblowing policy & procedure for maintained schools

Commitment to review

This policy will be flexible to change and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect where there are any changes in government legislation or any changes in the duty of statutory agencies. If it is not appropriate to refine the policy during the year, then this will be done as a matter of course on yearly basis by a named person responsible below, who shall be accountable for that action.

Whistleblowing policy & procedure for maintained schools 2025-2026- Document Status			
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These procedures should be read in conjunction with Telford & Wrekin Council's Speak Up (Whistleblowing) Policy and our school's Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy. Safeguarding concerns, or allegations against staff (including supply staff and volunteers) will be dealt with in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.

Summary & aims

This procedure is aligned with the statutory guidance outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025), Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework (2025). It also reflects best practice from the Freedom to Speak Up Review and whistleblowing protections under UK law. This policy and procedure sets out the Governing Bodies procedure to protect staff members who report colleagues or governors they believe are doing something wrong or illegal, or who are neglecting their duties. This procedure has a key role to play in safeguarding children.

As employees are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the school, it is important that they feel able to express their concerns without fear of harassment or victimisation. Otherwise they may find it easier to ignore the concern rather than report it. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 recognises this fact and is designed to protect employees, who make certain disclosures of information in 'the public interest', from detriment and/or dismissal. This policy and procedure builds on the provisions of the Act.

Principles of whistleblowing (with reference to Sir Robert's Francis' Freedom to Speak Up review report)

At Ladygrove Primary School we promote a culture of safety. We aim to develop practice as we learn and reflect. It is our aim for concerns to be raised, including whistleblowing in accordance with our policies and procedures. We aim to promote a school culture that is free from bullying between adults.

Our senior leadership team will be visible to all staff, volunteers and visitors to help assist anyone who needs to raise a concern to do so without barriers. Our nominated governor will also be known to staff and volunteers. Visitors will be informed of their name and contact details as part of our visitor's procedures.

At Ladygrove Primary School we value those who raise concerns and contribute to our reflective practice. Senior leaders and governors will take all opportunities to reflect on practice at leadership and governor meetings. This will be a regular agenda item.

We welcome all concerns to be raised either informally or formally through the steps set out below. This will enable us to swiftly and thoroughly find a resolution to concerns. All concerns will be dealt with promptly and swiftly by the Headteacher and/or nominated governor. While investigating any concerns they will remain proportionate and not lay blame on others. If necessary, this may involve mediation and/or dispute resolution. It may also be necessary to involve an officer of Telford & Wrekin Council.

At Ladygrove Primary School we understand the need for these measures to support good practice. We will ensure those who raise concerns receive the necessary support they need, such as support from a member of the senior leadership team, governing body, local authority officer and/or access to the employee well-being service.

All staff, including early years practitioners, supply staff, and volunteers, will receive whistleblowing training as part of their safeguarding induction. This includes how to report concerns, the protections available under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, and the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in managing safeguarding-related whistleblowing disclosures. Those responsible for handing concerns must also ensure they have the relevant knowledge and skills to do so.

Furthermore, under the Employment Rights Act 2025, disclosures concerning sexual harassment are explicitly recognised as protected disclosures under the whistleblowing provisions of this Act. This means that workers who raise concerns about sexual harassment are protected from detriment and unfair dismissal in accordance with whistleblowing legislation. Where allegations of sexual harassment are raised by an employee, this will be dealt with in line with the school's Sexual Harassment Policy which is available from the School Office.

It is our aim at Ladygrove Primary School that the handling of these concerns is done so in a transparent and accountable process. If necessary, the Headteacher and/or nominated governor may seek an external review of the concern or report it themselves to the local authority or a responsible person or body. Telford & Wrekin Council only support the good practice in the effective management of whistleblowing in schools.

Ladygrove Primary School recognises the need to take particular measures for vulnerable groups. We will ensure that supply staff and volunteers 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 to support and protect them. Students and trainees will also be subject to all the principles set out in these procedures. Our primary care will be embedding standards of practice to empower and protect staff and to enable them to raise concerns freely.

Culture and Prevention
The school is committed to fostering a culture of openness, transparency, and accountability. Staff are encouraged to raise concerns early, and leaders will regularly review systems and practices to prevent wrongdoing and promote ethical conduct.

Record Keeping
All whistleblowing concerns, whether informal or formal, must be recorded securely and confidentially. Records should include the nature of the concern, actions taken, and outcomes. These records will be retained in accordance with the school's data protection and safeguarding policies.

What is a whistleblower

You're a whistleblower if you're a worker and you report certain types of wrongdoing. This will usually be something you've seen at work - though not always.

The wrongdoing you disclose must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others, for example, pupils of the school.

As a whistleblower you're protected by law - you should not be treated unfairly or lose your job because you 'blow the whistle'.

You can raise your concern at any time about an incident that happened in the past, is happening now, or you believe will happen in the near future.

Who is protected by law

You're protected if you're a worker, for example you're:

- an employee, such as a teacher or lunchtime supervisor
- a trainee, such as a trainee teacher
- an agency worker, such as supply teacher.

You can get independent advice if you're not sure you're protected, for example from Citizens' Advice.

Confidentiality clauses in employment contracts or settlement agreements cannot override whistleblowing protections. Staff are legally entitled to raise concerns in the public interest and must not be subject to detriment or dismissal for doing so.

Complaints that count as whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:
You're protected by law if you report any of the following:

- a criminal offence, for example fraud;
- someone's health and safety is in danger;
- risk or actual damage to the environment;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- the company is breaking the law, for example does not have the right insurance, or
- you believe someone is covering up wrongdoing
- sexual harassment or unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, including where you reasonably believe this affects others or is in the public interest.

Concerns in education settings may relate to the treatment of children and young people. This could mean, for example, that a person or persons are:

- deliberately ignoring the best interests of the child or young person;
- teasing, harassing or touching a child or young person inappropriately;
- threatening a child, young person or a parent or distressing them in some way;
- neglecting a child by not giving them the support they need, including medical attention or
- care;
- hitting or restraining a child inappropriately;
- using a child or young person's money or possessions in an inappropriate way.

Where whistleblowing concerns relate to safeguarding, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be informed immediately. The DSL will assess the concern and determine whether it meets the threshold for referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or other statutory partners

Allegations against staff, including supply staff and volunteers, will be managed in accordance with Part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025). Concerns that meet the harm threshold will be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), and those that do not will be handled internally with appropriate oversight.

Complaints that do not count as whistleblowing

Personal grievances (for example bullying, harassment, discrimination) are not covered by whistleblowing law, unless your particular case is in the public interest.

These should be reported using the school's grievance policy.

Who to tell and what to expect

Before initiating the procedure employees should consider the following:

- the responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour rests with all employees;
- employees should use line manager or team meetings and other opportunities to raise questions and seek clarification on issues which are of day-to-day concern, and
- whilst it can be difficult to raise concerns about the practice or behaviour of a colleague, employees must act to prevent an escalation of the problem and to prevent themselves being potentially implicated.

This policy and procedure should not be used for complaints about an employee's personal circumstances, such as the way s/he has been treated at work. In these cases an employee should use the school's Grievance Procedure, unless it falls into of the categories of whistleblowing.

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.

In some instances it may be appropriate for an employee to ask the trade union to raise a matter on the employee's behalf.

A concern raised using any method is better than an employee raising no concern at all. Where an employee chooses to raise a concern in writing they should set out the background and history of the concerns, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reasons why s/he is particularly concerned about the situation. If an employee does not feel able to put the concern in writing, s/he should telephone or meet the appropriate person. It is important that, however the concern is raised, the employee makes it clear that s/he is raising the issue via the whistle-blowing procedure.

The earlier an employee expresses the concern, the easier it is to take action.

Although an employee is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, s/he will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for the concern.

In line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), particular attention will be given to supporting whistleblowers from vulnerable groups, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, trainees, and agency workers. Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure accessibility and protection from victimisation.

Process for reporting a concern relating to fraud, theft, irregularity, bribery or misuse of council funds

If the concern relates to fraud, theft, irregularity, bribery or misuse of council funds then this should be raised through the Telford & Wrekin Council Speak Up (Whistleblowing) procedure which provides a confidential hotline and online reporting facility in such cases the Council's Speak Up (Whistleblowing) Policy will be followed.
For more information or to use the Telford & Wrekin Council Speak Up (Whistleblowing) procedure visit https://www.telford.gov.uk/info/1001/about_my_council/3581/fraud_against_the_council/2

Process for reporting all other Whistleblowing concerns

Step 1
You report your concern to the **Headteacher** Jo Weichlbauer unless you feel they will cover it up, would treat you unfairly if you complained or have raised the matter before, but the concern hasn't been dealt with.

Step 2
You should report your concern to the **nominated governor** Nicky Brown unless you feel they will cover it up, would treat you unfairly if you complained or have raised the matter before, but the concern hasn't been dealt with.

Step 3
You should report your concern to the **local authority named persons, Glenn Ashbrooke**(LADO) for safeguarding concerns, or allegations against staff (including supply staff and volunteers) **and Rebecca Carey, Interim Director of Education and Skills** for any other concern, unless you feel they will cover it up, would treat you unfairly if you complained or have raised the matter before, but the concern hasn't been dealt with.

Step 4
You may report your concern to prescribed person or body, including but not limited to:

Ofsted, call their whistleblowing hotline on 0300 1233155, email whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or write to: WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

NSPCC, call their whistleblowing helpline on 0800 028 0285 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

Children's Commissioner for England, call 020 7783 8330, email info.request@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk or write to: The Office of the Children's Commissioner, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

Secretary of State for Education, call 0370 000 2288, electronic contact at www.gov.uk/contact-dfe or write to: Ministerial and Public Communications Division, Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Alternatively contact the **Whistleblowing charity**, 'Public Concern At Work' www.pcaw.org.uk

Step 5
There are other options if you do not want to report your concern to your employer or a prescribed person or body, for example you can get **legal advice** or contact your **MP**.

Making your claim anonymously or confidentially

You can tell the identified persons at Ladygrove Primary School, the local authority or a prescribed person anonymously all reports will be considered seriously; however, the ability to investigate may be limited if insufficient detail is provided. Where possible, whistleblowers are encouraged to provide contact details confidentially. You can give your name but request confidentiality - the person or body you tell should make every effort to protect your identity.

If you report your concern to the media, in most cases you'll lose your whistleblowing law rights.

What your employer or a prescribed person will do

Ladygrove Primary School or the prescribed person will listen to your concern and decide if any action is needed. You may be asked for further information.

You must say straight away if you do not want anyone else to know it was you who raised the concern.

You will not have a say in how your concern is dealt with.

Ladygrove Primary School or the prescribed person will keep you informed about the action they've taken, but they cannot give you much detail if they have to keep the confidence of other people.

A prescribed person cannot help you with your relationship with your employer.

If you're not satisfied with how Ladygrove Primary School dealt with your concern tell someone else or a prescribed person or body if you believe your concern was not taken seriously or the wrongdoing is still going on. Contact the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), the whistleblowing charity Protect or your trade union for more guidance.

The role of the Headteacher, Guardian or nominated governor

The Headteacher, Guardian or nominated governor may be informed by an employee about concern(s) and that s/he is "blowing the whistle" within the procedure in person; or in writing or over the phone.

Where a concern is reported directly to the Guardian they should then report it to the Headteacher, nominated governor or local authority named person as appropriate.

The Headteacher or nominated governor should respond immediately by arranging to meet with the employee to discuss the concern(s) as soon as possible.

Where whistleblowing concerns relate to safeguarding, the school will work in partnership with statutory safeguarding partners, including health, police, and local authority services, to ensure a coordinated and effective response.

At each meeting under this policy the employee may bring a colleague or trade union representative. The companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

Monitoring and Review:
The Governing Body will monitor whistleblowing cases annually to identify trends, ensure accountability, and promote a culture of openness. Lessons learned will inform staff training and policy updates.

Stage One:
At the initial meeting the Headteacher or governor should establish that:

- there is genuine cause and sufficient grounds for the concern; and
- the concern has been appropriately raised via the Whistleblowing Policy.

The Headteacher or nominated governor should ask the employee, to put their concern(s) in writing, if s/he has not already done so. If the employee is unable to do this the Headteacher or nominated governor will take down a written summary of his/her concern/s and provide him/her with a copy after the meeting. The Headteacher or nominated governor should make notes of the discussions with the employee. The employee's letter and/or Headteacher's or nominated governor's notes should make it clear that the employee is raising the issue via the Whistleblowing procedure and provide:

- the background and history of the concerns;
- names, dates and places (where possible); and
- the reasons why the employee is particularly concerned about the situation.

The employee should be asked to date and sign their letter and/or the notes of any discussion. However, for concerns raised anonymously this is optional. For those who raise anonymous concerns the concern should be dealt with anonymously. Although, this does not prevent the person who the concern is raised against identifying the person who reported the concern. Those responsible for handling the concern should never confirm the source and should do all that they can to protect the source.

The Headteacher or nominated governor should follow the policy as set out above and in particular explain to the employee:

- who he/she will need to speak to in order to determine the next steps
- what steps s/he intends to take to address the concern;
- how s/he will communicate with the employee during and at the end of the process. It should be noted that the need for confidentiality may prevent the school giving the employee specific details of any necessary investigation or any necessary disciplinary action taken as a result;
- that the employee will receive a written response within ten working days;
- that their identity will be protected as far as possible, but should the investigation into the concern require the employee to be named as the source of the information, that this will be discussed with the employee before their name is disclosed;
- that the Governing Body will do all that it can to protect the employee from discrimination and/or victimisation;
- that the matter will be taken seriously and investigated immediately;
- that if the employee's concern, though raised as a genuine concern, is not confirmed by the investigation, no punitive action will be taken against them;
- if clear evidence is uncovered during the investigation that s/he has made a malicious or vexatious allegation, disciplinary action may be taken against them; and
- the investigation may confirm their allegations to be unfounded in which case the Governing Body will deem the matter to be concluded unless new evidence becomes available.

Stage Two:
Following the initial meeting with the employee, the Headteacher or nominated governor should consult with the Chair of Governors and/or local authority to determine whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. A record should be made of the decisions and/or agreed actions.
It may be necessary, with anonymous allegations, to consider whether it is possible to take any further action. When making this decision, Headteacher or nominated governor should take the following factors into account:

- the seriousness of the issue(s) raised;
- the credibility of the concern(s); and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation(s) from attributable sources.

In some cases, it may be possible to resolve the concern(s) simply, by agreed action or an explanation regarding the concern(s), without the need for further investigation. However, depending on the nature of the concern(s) it may be necessary for the concern(s) to:

- be investigated internally;
- be investigated by the local authority;
- be referred to the police;
- be referred to the external auditor; or
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

Headteacher's or nominated governor's should have a working knowledge and understanding of other school policies and procedures, e.g. grievance, disciplinary, harassment, child protection procedures, to ensure that concerns raised by employees are addressed via the appropriate procedure/process.

Stage Three:
Within ten working days of a concern being received, the manager receiving the concern must write to the employee:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- indicating how they propose to deal with the matter;
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response; and/or
- telling the employee whether any initial enquiries have been made; and
- telling the employee whether further investigations will take place, and if not why not; and/or
- letting the employee know when s/he will receive further details if the situation is not yet resolved.

Untrue Allegations
If an employee makes an allegation where s/he has a genuine concern, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against that employee. If, however, we conclude that an employee has made malicious or vexatious allegations, or with a view to personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against that employee.

Unfounded Allegations
Following investigation, allegations may be confirmed as unfounded. This outcome will be notified to the employee who raised the concern, who will be informed that the Governing Body deems the matter to be concluded and that it should not be raised again unless new evidence becomes available.

If you're treated unfairly after whistleblowing

You can take a case to an employment tribunal if you've been treated unfairly because you've blown the whistle.

You can get further information from the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), Citizens' Advice, the whistleblowing charity Protect or your trade union.

If you reported your concern anonymously, you may find it harder to argue that your unfair treatment was as a result of your whistleblowing.

You must raise any claim of unfair dismissal within 3 months of your employment ending.

You must notify Acas if you want to take your case to an employment tribunal.