



# Whistleblowing Policy Mitchell House School

This policy for staff has been prepared by the Board of Governors and the Principal of Mitchell House School in line with the Education Authority Whistleblowing policy.

The school encourages all employees with serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and raise their concerns without fear of being disloyal or suffering harassment or victimisation as a result.

It is important not to ignore concerns over potential failings or malpractice and that they are identified and reported at an early stage so that the Principal/Governors can take appropriate action. The school recognises that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis so that the position of the 'whistleblower' can be protected.

The aim of this policy is to:

- ensure that all staff feel supported in speaking up in confidence and reporting matters they suspect may involve anything improper, unethical and inappropriate.
- provide clear procedures for the reporting of such matters.
- manage all disclosures in a timely, consistent and professional manner; and
- provide assurance that all disclosures will be taken seriously, treated as confidential and managed without fear of victimisation.

It is expected that all staff will:

- Undertake their duties in a professional manner with honesty, integrity and impartiality.
- Adhere to the policies and practices of the school.
- Ensure that good relationships are maintained with staff, pupils, parents and other professionals.
- Ensure confidentiality in all matters relating to staff, pupils, parents and other professionals.
- Respect the right for everyone to work in an environment free from discrimination, verbal or physical aggression, harassment and bullying.
- Receive and extend professional respect towards all staff.

### **Raising a concern regarding a member of staff**

You may have an issue, point of conflict or difficulty with a colleague on a personal level which can be addressed on a personal level through opening lines of communication and discussion.

If this is not possible, as a first step, concerns should be raised with the line manager or supervisor because the issue causing concern could be immediately clarified. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the alleged wrongdoing or malpractice.

If an individual feels unable to raise the matter with their line manager / Key Stage Leader, then the Vice Principal is the next point of contact followed by the Principal.

Your concern may be raised orally or in writing. The person you are raising the issue with may ask you for the details in writing for the purposes of clarity. Your preference

for anonymity will be respected however this can make investigations more difficult, a thorough investigation might reveal your identity and there is always a risk of speculation by those involved in the investigation.

If a member of staff has a concern regarding another member of staff the order of action should be as follows;

- Stage 1: Attempt to resolve the difficulty at a personal level.
- Stage 2: Address the matter to your line manager who should endeavour to help you resolve the matter.
- Stage 3: Refer the matter to the Vice-Principal.
- Stage 4: Discuss your concern with the Principal or if the concern is in relation to the Principal with Vice-Principal who will refer the matter to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

N.B. If your concern is in relation to staff code of conduct towards a pupil or pupils, please go directly to stage 4 (The Principal).

Where a resolution has not been satisfactory under this 4-stage approach you may wish to follow our Complaints Procedure which has a 2 stage approach:

1. Complaint to the Principal in writing
2. Complaint to the Board of Governors in writing.

The governors recognise that it can be difficult to assess at what level your concern should be raised, for example there may be certain situations where your concern should be raised under the EA grievance procedures or bullying and harassment procedures.

Some complaints might be appropriately directed to the PSNI, Northern Ireland Audit Office or DENI. In such cases staff would be advised to seek advice from their trade union.