



ABBOT'S WAY SCHOOL

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WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

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ABBOT'S WAY SCHOOL

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ABBOT'S WAY SCHOOL

WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

1. Introduction

Abbot's Way School is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. Employees with any concerns about our work must come forward and voice those concerns. This also applies to concerns about the activities of staff, Governing Board and external organisations and/or professionals in their dealings with the school.

There are other procedures in place to enable employees to raise grievances about their own employment, but this policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of individual grievances. The concern may be about something that:

- is unlawful
- is against Abbot's Way School's policies, procedures and guidance
- falls below established standards of good practice
- puts a child or young person at risk
- amounts to improper conduct or misconduct
- seems likely to harm somebody or the environment or
- represents a cover-up of these sorts of issues.

This policy and all associated procedures apply to all staff (including agency staff, volunteers and students on placement) and should be read in conjunction with other safeguarding and employment policies including (not an exhaustive list):

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Compliments and Complaints Policy
- Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- E-Safety and Multi-Media Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Management of Behaviour: Rewards and Sanctions Policy
- Off-Site Visits Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Runaway and Missing from Home, Care and Education (RMFHCE) Policy
- Safe Working (Caring) Practice Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Failure to comply with these policies and procedures may result in disciplinary action.

2. Safeguards

(a) Harassment or victimisation

We recognise that the decision to report a concern can be difficult for someone to make, not least because of the fear of reprisals from those responsible for the malpractice. Abbot's Way School will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take all possible measures to protect employees who raise concerns in good faith.

(b) Confidentiality

Abbot's Way School will, as far as possible, protect the identity of employees who raise concerns and do not want their name to be disclosed. However, it must be appreciated, that the investigation may reveal the source of the information, and statements made by the employee may be required as part of the evidence.

We encourage employees to put their name to allegations made. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered after the following factors have been taken into account:

- the seriousness of the issue raised;
- the credibility of the concern;
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other attributable sources; and
- the possibility of false, malicious or vexatious allegations.

If an allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. However, if employees make allegations that are found (through an investigation) to be false, malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action will be taken against them.

3. How to raise a concern

All staff have a duty to report any concerns about the safeguarding and welfare of children and young people. Line managers are obliged to ask all staff at every supervision session about whether they have observed or know about any concerning practice or whether they are worried about a child. However, if staff are concerned they must not wait for their supervision session as this could delay action to protect a child. For any other concerns that do not relate to the safety or welfare of children, the earlier they express their concerns the easier it is to take action.

As a first step an employee should normally raise concerns with their supervisor or line manager. However, this depends on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice. Employees who are unwilling or unable to approach their supervisor or line manager must approach the Joint Heads.

Any concern regarding one of the Joint Heads should be referred immediately to the Chair of the Advisory Governing Board and Somerset Direct –

Concerns should normally be raised in writing and describe the following:

- background and history of the concern
- names, dates and places (where possible) and
- reason(s) why the employee is concerned about the situation.

An employee who does not feel able to put their concerns in writing can telephone or meet the appropriate member of staff, as set out above.

Employees may invite a representative of their trade union or professional association to raise the matter in conjunction with them.

4. How will the School's management respond?

The action taken by the School's management will depend on the nature of the concern and the evidence available. The matter may for example, be investigated internally or referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and/or the police.

In order to protect individuals initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Some low level concerns may be resolved by agreed action if the employee who raised the concern is happy and feels that this will put the matter right.

Within 10 working days of a concern being received, the Joint Heads must write to the employee who raised the issue:

- acknowledging that the concern has been raised
- indicating how they propose to deal with the matter
- telling the employee what further investigations will take place, and if none, why not
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response (where possible).

Abbot's Way School accepts that employees need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Therefore, subject to legal or contractual constraints, employees will be told the outcomes of any investigations and/or the reason why they cannot be told the full information.

5. Taking the issue further

This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue to raise relevant concerns within Abbot's Way School. It is hoped that employees will be satisfied with the action taken as a result. We recognise that in certain circumstances employees may not be able to approach us about their concern, in that case they can contact the regulator (Ofsted) directly using the contact details below.

- Ofsted Whistle Blowing hotline
Telephone: 0300 123 3155 (Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 6.00pm).
Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
Address: WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester. M1 2WD

If as a member of staff, you are not satisfied with our response and feel it is right to take the matter outside of Abbot's Way School the following are possible contact points, some or all of which may be appropriate:

- regulatory organisations e.g. Ofsted (as above) The Health and Safety Executive
- relevant professional bodies such as the NSPCC or trade unions
- the police

As a further safeguarding measure, we use the services of 'safecall', an independent whistleblowing company which can be used by all staff should they be unhappy about any wrongdoing at Abbot's Way School. Safecall can be contacted on 0800 915 1571 or online at www.safecall.co.uk/report where an anonymous report can be made detailing any concerns.

6. Implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review

The designated senior members of staff with overall responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the 'Whistle Blowing Policy' are the Joint Heads.

The designated member of staff is also responsible for ensuring that all staff, parents/carers and placing local authorities are aware of our policy. A copy of this policy document is available for inspection on the premises during office hours and an electronic copy is posted on our website www.abbotswayschool.com

This policy document will be reviewed and published in writing at least annually and, if necessary, more frequently in response to any significant incidents or new developments in national, local and organisational policy, guidance and practice.

The School will also undertake an annual review of the school's policies and procedures relating to safeguarding, and ensure that all duties have been discharged in accordance with current legislation, regulations and statutory guidance; as well as local authority procedures and practice including the relevant Local Safeguarding Children Board(s).

The School stringently holds senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance through robust systems of governance and monitoring.