

PORTFIELD SCHOOL & SATELLITE CENTRES



POLICY DOCUMENT FOR WHISTLEBLOWING



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Reviewing the Policy

This policy will be reviewed biennially in consultation with staff, parents and governors.

This policy was adopted by:

Headteacher Date

Chair of Governors Date

Portfield School Mission Statement

Working together Learning together Achieving together

At Portfield School we strive to

- Create a happy, safe, supportive and stimulating learning environment
- Value everyone
- Develop everyone’s personal, social, emotional health and wellbeing
- Promote relevant academic and vocational skills
- Meet individual needs through an imaginative and flexible approach
- Enable all learners to achieve their full potential

UNCRC United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

- Portfield School places the values and principles of the UNCRC at the heart all policies and practices
- Portfield School is a Rights Respecting School

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Whistleblowing Policy

1. Overview

- 1.1 This policy outlines what you should do if you suspect something happening at work is putting you or others in danger, or is illegal or unethical.
- 1.2 It is designed to provide assurance to employees that they can raise concerns about unethical behaviour without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.
- 1.3 It applies to all employees, contractors, consultants, officers, casual and agency workers.

2. What is Whistleblowing?

2.1 Our aim is to maintain the highest standards of integrity in everything we do, but all organisations can occasionally be affected by conduct that is dangerous, against the law or breaches ethical or professional codes. Should you have such concerns, we encourage you to report them immediately – this is called ‘whistleblowing’. You can be assured that we will take your concerns seriously, they will be thoroughly investigated, and you can be confident there will be no reprisals.

2.2 The types of concerns you may want to raise with us by whistleblowing include:

- any activity you suspect is criminal
- any activity you suspect puts health and safety at risk
- any activity you suspect may damage the environment
- any activity you suspect is a miscarriage of justice
- any activity you suspect breaches our policy on bribery and corruption
- any failure to comply with legal or regulatory obligations
- any failure to meet professional requirements
- any attempt to conceal one or more of these activities.

There is no need for you to prove that the concern you are alleging has occurred or is likely to occur; a reasonable suspicion will suffice, speak to one of the prescribed people listed if you are not sure whether something you have become aware of is covered by this policy.

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Note that this policy does not cover anything to do with you personally — how other people are treating you, for example. For this, please refer to our policies on dignity at work and then to our grievance procedure for guidance on how to proceed.

This whistleblowing procedure is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of this Authority are at risk.

3. How to raise a whistleblowing concern

For your concern to be protected you should make it to the 'prescribed person' and in the right way.

3.1 As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager or your Head of Service. If you work in a school you can contact the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors, or the Governor nominated for Whistleblowing. Councillors should raise concerns with the Monitoring Officer. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice.

3.2 If you are unable to speak with your line manager or Head of Service, either put your concern in writing, telephone or arrange to meet one of the following individuals known as a '**prescribed person**' for the purposes of Whistleblowing, who are able to receive your issue of concern and provide advice and guidance on the procedure:

- Ceri Davies, Head of HR, 01437 775862
Ceri.davies@pembrokeshire.gov.uk
- Jon Haswell, Chief Finance Officer, 01437 775839
Jon.haswell@pembrokeshire.gov.uk
- Claire Jones, Monitoring Officer, 01437 776564
Claire.Jones@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

3.3 Where the concern relates to a **child protection matter**, you must consult the Authority's **Child Care Assessment Team asking for the Duty Manager on 01437 776322/6325 or Out of Hours 08708 509 508** who will in turn inform the designated lead on child protection for the Authority, Diane Beacroft Service Manager Safeguarding & Quality Assurance

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diane.beacroft@pembrokeshire.gov.uk Diane Beacroft will ensure the link with relevant prescribed person as appropriate.

- 3.4 For all concerns, if you are a member of a Trade Union, you can contact your Branch Representative or Regional Office, who you may invite to raise a matter on your named behalf.
- 3.5 Your letter should say that you are raising your concerns under this policy, you should include:
- i. the background and history of the concern (giving relevant key facts, names of the people involved, dates and places);
 - ii. the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

4. How the Authority will respond

- 4.1 You will be invited to a meeting to discuss your concerns, and you are entitled to be accompanied at this and any subsequent meetings by a colleague or trade union representative. If you bring a companion, you must both agree to keep your disclosures confidential before and after the meeting and during any investigation that may follow.
- 4.2 After the initial meeting, we will investigate your concerns and we may ask you to attend further meetings. To investigate properly, we may involve specialists with particular knowledge or experience of the issues you have raised.
- 4.3 You will be kept informed about how our investigations are progressing and how long they are likely to take. Sometimes, however, we may be unable to give you details about the investigation (or any action it leads to) as we need to protect confidentiality. We understand this may be frustrating and give you concerns about whether we have actually done anything, and if this happens we will do our best to explain why we are acting in the way we are.
- 4.4 Your concerns will be addressed fairly, but we cannot guarantee the outcome of our investigations will be the one you want. If you are not satisfied with how we have conducted the investigations, you can take the matter to one of our directors for further consideration.

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- 4.5 In the case of an allegation against an elected member, then the matter will be considered, in the first instance, by the Monitoring Officer or Chief Executive, who may refer the matter to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (if appropriate).
- 4.6 Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.
- 4.7 The Authority will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of “whistleblowers” including informal pressures, and will treat this as a serious disciplinary offence which will be dealt with under the relevant disciplinary rules and procedures. If you are subject to any detrimental treatment as a result of “whistleblowing” it should be raised immediately with the line manager so that the matter can be investigated thoroughly without undue delay.

5. Confidentiality and anonymity

- 5.1 There is a significant difference between wanting to keep your concerns confidential and making a disclosure anonymously. We actively discourage anonymous whistleblowing.
- 5.2 You are always encouraged to raise concerns openly, and if you prefer to do so in confidence we will do all that we can to ensure your identity remains hidden. We may want to disclose your identity to people involved in the investigation, but will always discuss this with you first.
- 5.3 You are protected from reprisals under this policy (see paragraph 4.7), but if you are still worried we encourage you to discuss this with us and we will explore how far we can go in keeping your concerns confidential.
- 5.4 Concerns raised anonymously are very difficult — and sometimes impossible — to investigate. We can’t properly establish whether your allegations are credible without being able to ask you for more details or for clarification, and this makes it hard to reach an informed decision. This is why we urge you not to report matters anonymously.

6. How the matter can be taken outside the Authority

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This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the Authority to raise concerns. If you feel it is right to take the matter outside the Authority there are prescribed routes. The following are appropriate contact points:

- Wales Audit Office (tel 01244 525980) or email whistleblowing@wao.gov.uk
- Audit Commission Confidential Public Interest Disclosure Line (0845 052 2646)
- Police.
- **External Prescribed Persons and Bodies:**The attached link provides a list of the prescribed people and bodies you can make a disclosure to. If you decide to blow the whistle to a prescribed person other than your employer, you must make sure that you have chosen the correct person or body for your issue. The schedule of prescribed persons can be accessed via this web link: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183340/11-641-blowing-the-whistle-to-a-prescribed-person.pdf

7. Untrue Allegations/Misuse of Procedure

Most concerns are raised with us in good faith, but occasionally someone makes a false allegation out of malice or because they believe they have something to gain. Anyone found doing this will face action under our disciplinary policy and may be disciplined for misconduct, or even dismissed for gross misconduct.

8. Independent Advice on making a disclosure

If you are thinking about making a disclosure and you are not sure what your legal rights are, you should consider getting independent advice. There are a number of avenues through a number of different external agencies:

- **Trade Union:** irrespective of which Trade Union you are a member of the universal advice would be for you to seek advice and involve the local branch and regional office before making any disclosure.
UNISON have produced a Duty of Care Handbook for employees working in health and social care which has a Section 5.1 on whistleblowing
<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2013/06/On-line-Catalogue197863.pdf>

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- **Public Concern at Work:** a whistleblowing charity offers free, confidential advice to people who are unsure whether or how to raise a whistleblowing concern at work. There are a number of whistleblowing case studies on this site demonstrating the types of wrongdoing whistleblowers are worried about.
<http://www.pcaw.org.uk/case-studies>
Their Whistleblowing Advice Line is managed by lawyers **0207404 6609**. <http://www.pcaw.co.uk/>
- **NHS whistleblowing helpline** from January 2012 is now extended to social care staff.
www.dh.gov.uk/health/2011/12/whistleblowing-helpline **0800 724 725**, the helpline will operate on weekdays between 08.00 and 18.00 with an out-of-hours answering service available at weekends and on public holidays. You can contact the helpline if you have concerns and are unsure how to raise them or simply want advice on best practice in safeguarding.
- **Teacher Support Network Cymru 08000 855 088**
<http://www.teachersupport.info/wales/> they have an online support line 24 / 7 which will give free confidential advice.

11. Final Reminder – “Do’s and Don’ts”

Do’s

- Make an immediate note of your concerns (i.e. times, dates, witnesses).
- Convey your suspicions to someone with appropriate authority and experience.
- Deal with the matter promptly.
- Seek advice from management and/or a recognised trade union.

Don’ts

- Do nothing.
- Be afraid of raising your concerns.
- Approach or accuse any individuals directly.
- Try to investigate the matter yourself.
- Convey your suspicions to anyone other than those with proper authority

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The Code should be read in conjunction with the Anti-Fraud and Anti Corruption Strategy, on the Finance, Internal Documents page.

http://pccintranet/content.asp?nav=104,150,157&parent_directory_id=101

and the Code of Conduct on the Employee Handbook, Section 2

http://pccintranet/content.asp?nav=275,277&parent_directory_id=101

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