Springwell School

Whistleblowing (Duty to Act) Policy

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Next review: **November 2026**

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Aims

- To define whistleblowing.
- To give details of Southampton City Council's Whistleblowing Policy.
- To set out a whistleblowing procedure.

Principles

Whistleblowing is a way for employees of an organisation to raise reasonably and honestly held concerns they may have about serious matters that could put the school, council and/or the wider public at risk. Whistleblowing usually involves bringing forward concerns that it is in the public interest to investigate and resolve. Examples are crime, fraud, the giving or taking of bribes, financial malpractice, or practices that might endanger individuals or the environment. The aim of this policy is to outline what you can do if you believe you need to raise an issue of this nature, and how you will be protected if you do.

INTRODUCTION

All of us at one time or another have concerns about what is happening at work. Usually, these concerns are easily resolved. However, when they are about unlawful conduct, illegality, financial malpractice, endangering an individual's health or safety, or dangers to the public (including care users and clients), employees, pupils, or the environment, it can be difficult to know what to do.

You may be worried about raising such issues or may want to keep the concerns to yourself, perhaps feeling it is none of your business or that it is only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to the school or organisation. You may decide to say something but find that you have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

Southampton City Council has introduced this policy, which reflects the legal framework and the legal obligations placed upon the Council and Springwell School, to enable you to raise your concerns about such malpractice at an early stage and in the right way. We would rather that you raised the matter when it is just a concern rather than wait for proof.

If something is troubling you which you think we should know about or look into, please use this policy. If, however, you are aggrieved about your personal position, please use the Grievance Policy - which you can get from your Line Manager or Human Resources. This Whistleblowing Policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the organisation itself are at risk.

IF IN DOUBT - RAISE IT!

OUR ASSURANCES TO YOU

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides legal protection, in certain circumstances, to workers making disclosures about malpractice. The Act makes it unlawful for the council to dismiss anyone or allow them to be victimised on the basis that they have made an appropriate lawful disclosure in accordance with the Act.

If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of retribution as a result. Provided you reasonably believe what you are reporting is true, and that the disclosure is in the public interest, it does not matter if you are mistaken. Of course, we do not extend this assurance to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know is untrue. In that case, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

We will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern. Taking reprisals against an employee who has raised a concern in good faith is unacceptable and may give rise to disciplinary proceedings. If you have raised a concern and feel at any stage subsequently that you are suffering as a result of doing so, please let a Co-Head Teacher know so that appropriate action can be taken.

However, we recognise that you may nonetheless want to raise a concern in confidence under this policy. If you ask us to protect your identity by keeping your confidence, we will not disclose it without your consent. If the situation arises where we are not able to resolve the concern without revealing your identity (for instance because your evidence is needed in court), we will discuss with you whether and how we can proceed.

Remember that if you do not tell us who you are, it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter or to protect your position or to give you feedback. Accordingly, while we will consider anonymous reports, this policy is not well suited to concerns raised anonymously.

Procedure

HOW WE WILL HANDLE THE MATTER

1. Once you have told us of your concern, we will investigate it to assess initially what action should be taken. This may involve an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. We will tell you who is handling the matter, how you can contact them and whether your further assistance may be needed. If you request it, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it.

2. When you raise the concern, you may be asked how you think the matter might best be resolved. If you do have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset. If your concern falls more properly within the Grievance Policy, we will tell you.

3. While the purpose of this policy is to enable us to investigate possible malpractice and take appropriate steps to deal with it, we will give you as much feedback as we properly can. If requested, we will confirm our response to you in writing. Please note, however, that we may not be able to tell you the precise action we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed by us to someone else.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN INTERNALLY

Step One

- If staff in school have a concern about malpractice, wherever possible please raise it with your Line Manager first. This may be done orally or in writing.
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Step Two

- If staff in school feel unable to raise the matter with their Line Manager, for whatever reason, please raise the matter with a Co-Headteacher. Please say if you want to raise the matter in confidence so that they can make appropriate arrangements.
- If you feel unable to raise the matter with the Co-Headteacher, for whatever reason, please raise the matter with the HR Advisor or Chair of Governors.
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Step Three

- For staff in school, if these channels have been followed and you still have concerns, or the above are not appropriate to you (for example, you are a contractor or consultant) or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, please contact:

Richard Ivory	Telephone: 023 8083 2794
Service Director Legal and Governance	Email: Richard.ivory@southampton.gov.uk

Mel Creighton	Telephone: 023 8083 3528
Executive Director Enabling Services	Email: mel.creighton@southampton.gov.uk

Elizabeth Goodwin	Telephone: 07908 184889
Chief Internal Auditor Internal Audit	Email: Elizabeth.goodwin@southampton.gov.uk

Or any member of school staff or of a school's governing body nominated by the governing body as a contact.

Step Four

- For staff in school, if for whatever reason, you feel uncomfortable in reporting your concerns direct to the named officers above, then there is a facility to submit a report via email to the following generic in-box: Duty.to.act@southampton.gov.uk

INDEPENDENT ADVICE

If you are unsure whether to use this policy or you require independent advice at any stage, you may contact:

- if applicable, your union; or
- your professional body (e.g. British Association of Social Workers, National College for Teaching and Leadership etc);

EXTERNAL CONTACTS

While we hope this policy gives you the reassurance you need to raise such matters internally, we recognise that there may be circumstances where you can properly report matters to outside bodies, such as regulators or the police.

If you choose not to raise the matter internally, we would rather you raised the matter with the appropriate "regulator" than not at all. Provided you reasonably believe what you are reporting is true, that it is in the public interest, and you have evidence to back up your concern, you can also contact certain external bodies. However, not all disclosures to external bodies or individuals benefit from the protection set out in this policy. Raising a matter with a third party who you reasonably believe is responsible for the wrongdoing, or a legal adviser, or a person prescribed by Parliament (such as HMRC, the Health and Safety Executive, Office of Fair Trading) will still be protected. Any further disclosure will only be protected if you reasonably believe that your concern is substantially true, you are not acting for any gain, and it is so serious that you could not disclose it to the School, Council or one of the prescribed bodies first.

IF YOU ARE DISSATISFIED

If you are unhappy with our response, remember you can go to the other levels and bodies detailed in this Policy.

While we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we will handle the matter fairly and properly. By using this policy, you will help us to achieve this.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy is set out by Southampton City Council and will be reviewed/updated by Springwell School, in line with SCC Policy annually.