

## SEAHAM TRINITY PRIMARY SCHOOL



## WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

### Introduction

The staff and governors of **Seaham Trinity Primary School** seek to run all aspects of school business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity. In the event that members of the school staff, parents, governors or the school community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern, Seaham Trinity has established the following whistleblowing policy, or code of practice, which acts as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially and provides for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter to bring it to satisfactory conclusion.

Throughout this policy, the term *whistleblower* denotes the person raising the concern or making the complaint. It is not meant in a pejorative sense and is entirely consistent with the terminology used by Lord Nolan as recommended in the *Second Report of the Committee on Standard in Public Life: Local Spending Bodies* published in May 1996.

Seaham Trinity Primary is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. Seaham Trinity Primary recognises that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and has therefore developed a system which allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the school environment but also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the school.

Seaham Trinity Primary is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness so that a person who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise the matter with full confidence that the matter will be appropriately considered and resolved.

The provisions of this policy apply to matters of suspected fraud and impropriety and not matters of more general grievance which would be dealt with under the Seaham Trinity grievance procedures.



### **When might the whistleblowing policy apply?**

The type of activity or behaviour which Seaham Trinity Primary considers should be dealt with under this policy includes:

- Manipulation of accounting records and finances
- inappropriate use of school assets or funds
- decision-making for personal gain
- any criminal activity
- abuse of position
- fraud or deceit
- serious breaches of school procedures which may advantage a particular party (for example tampering with tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest)
- if someone's health and safety is in danger
- damage to the environment
- the company is not obeying the law (for example not having the correct insurance)
- covering up wrong doing

### **What action should the *whistleblower* take?**

Seaham Trinity Primary encourages the *whistleblower* to raise the matter internally in the first instance to allow those school staff and governors in positions of responsibility and authority the opportunity to right the wrong and give an explanation for the behaviour or activity.

The school should publicise its whistleblowing policy so that external parties are aware of its existence in the event they have legitimate concerns or complaints. All staff and external parties should be aware that there is an external route for raising the matter outside the management structure of the school.

The policy should make clear that concerns are taken seriously and victimising employees or the public or deterring them from raising concerns is unacceptable and may constitute a serious disciplinary offence. It should also be stressed that mischief making and raising unfounded malicious allegations will be treated equally severely.

By passing the internal system and raising concerns directly through external channels may be perceived as adversarial, unnecessarily.

Seaham Trinity Primary has designated a number of individuals to specifically deal with such matters and the whistleblower is invited to decide which of those individuals would be the most appropriate person to deal with the matter.

Name & Position

Ray Bushby - Head teacher

Chris Robinson – Chair of Governors

Janet Tomlin – Staff Member

Contact Details

Email:- r.bushby100@seahamtrinity.co.uk

Email:- c.robinson305@seahamtrinity.co.uk

Email:- j.tomlin100@seahamtrinity.co.uk

The whistleblower may prefer to raise the matter in person, by telephone or in written form marked private and confidential and addressed to one of the above named individuals. All matters will be treated in strict confidence and anonymity will be respected wherever possible.

Alternatively if the *whistleblower* considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the school, the matter should be directed in the first instance to the Council's Head of Audit.

The Council has its own procedures for dealing with such matters and will ensure every effort to respect the confidentiality of the *whistleblower*. The Council will ensure relevant officers of the Department for Education and Employment are informed as appropriate.

In addition information and advice can be obtained from the charity Public Concern at Work. This charity offers free legal advice in certain circumstances to people concerned about serious malpractice at work. Their literature states that matters are handled in strict confidence and without obligation. Contact details for the charity are as follows:

Public Concern at Work

The Green House

244-254 Cambridge Heath Road

London E2 9DA

Website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-us/>

Protect Advice Line: 020 3117 2520 (Option 1)

Business Support: 020 3117 2520 (Option 2)

Fax: 020 7403 8823

### **How will the matter be progressed?**

The individual(s) in receipt of the information or allegation [the investigating officer(s)] will carry out a preliminary investigation. This will seek to establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation and can be resolved internally. The initial assessment may identify the need to involve third parties to provide further information, advice or assistance, for example involvement of other members of school staff, legal or personnel advisors, the police, the department for Education and Employment, the Council.

Records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation. The investigating officer(s), possibly in conjunction with the governing body, will consider how best to report the findings and what corrective action needs to be taken. This may include some form of disciplinary action or third party referral such as the police.

The *whistleblower* will be informed of the results of the investigation and the action taken to address the matter. Depending on the nature of the concern or allegation and whether or not it has been substantiated, the matter will be reported to the governing body and the Council

The school should inform the whistleblower of the results of the investigation stating what actions are to be taken. If the whistleblower is not satisfied with the response and proposed action or is unhappy with the conduct of the investigation or alternatively prefers anonymity from the school and governing body, the policy should include details of the regulatory body so that concerns can be raised externally.

### **Respecting Confidentiality**

Wherever possible Seaham Trinity Primary seeks to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the *whistleblower* and will as far as possible protect him/her from reprisals. Seaham Trinity Primary will not tolerate any attempt to victimise the *whistleblower* or attempts to prevent concerns being raised and will consider and necessary disciplinary or corrective action appropriate to the circumstances.

A worker cannot be dismissed because of whistleblowing. If they are, they can claim unfair dismissal – they will be protected by law as long as certain criteria are met.

## **Raising unfounded malicious concerns**

Individuals are encouraged to come forward in good faith with genuine concerns with the knowledge they will be taken seriously. If individuals raise malicious unfounded concerns or attempt to make mischief, this will also be taken seriously and may constitute a disciplinary offence or require some other form of penalty appropriate to the circumstances.

## **Conclusion**

Existing good practice within Seaham Trinity Primary in terms of its systems of internal control financial and non – financial and the external regulatory environment in which the school operates ensure that the cases of suspected fraud or impropriety rarely occur. The whistleblowing policy is provided as a reference document to establish a framework within which issues can be raised confidentially internally and if necessary outside the management structure of the school. This document is a public commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned.

Agreed by Finance Committee-date.....

Signed (Chair of Finance Committee .....)

Date to be reviewed.....