

MICKLE TRAFFORD VILLAGE SCHOOL



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Date of policy	Spring 2021
Date for Review	Spring 2024
Signed Headteacher	
Signed Chair of Governors	
Date policy approved by School Governing Body	

Introduction

The staff and governors of Mickle Trafford Village 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 school staff, parents, governors or the school community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern Mickle Trafford Village School 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 a satisfactory conclusion.

Mickle Trafford Village School is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. Mickle Trafford Village School 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.

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 Mickle Trafford Village School grievance procedures.

The aims of this policy are:

- To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected as far as possible.
- To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns.
- To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. The type of activity or behaviour which Mickle Trafford Village School considers should be dealt with under this policy includes:

- criminal activity
- failure to comply with any legal, professional obligation and/ or regulatory requirements
- miscarriages of justice
- danger to health and safety
- damage to the environment;
- a breach of the Anti-Fraud & Corruption and/or Anti-Bribery Policies
- fraud and/ or mismanagement/ unauthorised use of public funds
- negligence including abuse of Customers (external) including sexual, physical and/or financial
- breach of the Council's internal policies and procedures, including our Code of Conduct
- conduct likely to damage the Council's reputation
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential/ sensitive information
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of Mickle Trafford Village School's activities then it should be reported under this policy.

Raising a whistleblowing concern?

Mickle Trafford Village School 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.

Mickle Trafford Village School 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	Contact details
Wendy Lyon	Headteacher	head@mickletrafford.cheshire.sch.uk 01244 981321
Natalie Harrison	Joint Chair of Governors	natalie.harrison@mickletrafford.cheshire.sch.uk
Clare Arnold	Joint Chair of Governors	clare.arnold@mickletrafford.cheshire.sch.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.

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 or 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.

If the whistleblower is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter or has genuine concerns that the matter has not been handled appropriately, the concerns should be raised with the investigating officer(s), the governing body and/or directed to the Council.

Respecting confidentiality

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

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 Mickle Trafford Village School in terms of its systems of internal control both financial and non-financial and the external regulatory environment in which the school operates ensure that cases of suspected fraud or impropriety rarely occur. This 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.

Key Contacts and additional information

Whistleblowing Officer	Helen Peters (Internal Audit) 01244 977 375 helen.peters@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)	Vanessa Whiting 01244 975 970 vanessa.whiting@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk Karen McIlwaine (Deputy MO) 01244 977 802 Karen.mcilwaine@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Director of Finance (Head of Internal Audit)	Debbie Hall Debbie.hall@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
External Auditors	Grant Thornton 0151 224 7200
Whistleblowing hotline (Internal)	01244 973 223 whistleblowing@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Fraud hotline	0300 123 7030 fraud@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
Council's Employee Assistance Programme	0800 116 4368 www.lifestyleaction.net
Public Concern at Work (Independent whistleblowing charity)	Helpline: (020) 7404 6609 E-mail: helpline@pcaw.co.uk Website: www.pcaw.co.uk