

TMPF Whistleblowing Policy 2023



Approved: March 2023
Next review: Spring 2026

*The Moorlands Primary Federation comprises seven schools:
Bishop Rawle C. E. Primary School; Dilhorne Endowed C. E. Primary School;
Great Wood Primary School; Hollinsclough C.E. Academy; Manifold C.E. Academy,
St. Werburgh's C. E. Primary School; and The Valley Primary School.*

Introduction

This policy relates to each school comprising The Moorlands Primary Federation (see above). From this point onwards, they will be referred to as the Trust or TMPF. This policy enables all stakeholders to report, confidentially, serious concerns about any aspects of work which stakeholders suspect involves criminal behaviour or other specific forms of malpractice, damage to the environment, or any action that threatens health and safety.

The Trust is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment, we expect employees and others working at the school who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Trust's work, to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

This policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns they may have within the Trust. In doing so, the Trustees wish to make it clear that individuals can inform their employers without fear of victimisation, discrimination or disadvantage as a result of their 'whistleblowing'.

This policy enables the confidential reporting of serious concerns about any aspects of the Trust's work which you suspect involves criminal behaviour or other specific forms of malpractice, damage to the environment, or action that threatens health and safety. Provided that you act in good faith, and that you have a reasonable suspicion that the alleged malpractice has occurred, you can disclose your concerns using this procedure and be protected by law from victimisation or dismissal.

Legislative Background

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (known as the 'Whistleblowers Act') protects employees against any detrimental treatment or dismissal if, in the interest of the public, they disclose to their employer matters concerning the conduct of the school and its personnel that would normally be regarded as confidential.

It does not apply to any grievance that an employee may have about his/her/their own employment for which Trustees have already established statutory procedures to enable them to seek redress under the provisions of the School Staffing (England) Regulations 2003, Regulation 6 (1)(b)1.

Aims and scope of this policy

This policy is intended to cover any major concerns that qualify for protection as 'qualifying disclosures' and fall outside the scope of other statutory procedures adopted by the Trust Board. Qualifying disclosures are disclosures of information which the employee reasonably believes to show one of the following matters is happening now, took place in the past, or is likely to happen in

the future: conduct which is an offence, a breach of the law or (for our Anglican schools) contrary to Church teaching; disclosures related to miscarriages of justice; health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees; damage to the environment; the unauthorised use of public or Church funds; possible fraud and corruption; abuse of pupils; any other unethical or immoral conduct.

Any serious concerns that any employee may have about malpractice in any aspect of service provision or the conduct of employees or Trustees of the school or others acting on behalf of the school can be reported under this policy.

The conduct in question may be something that makes an employee feel an act is unacceptable in terms of known standards, or the values, beliefs and standards to which the Trust subscribes, is against the school's trust deed, Code of Conduct, or any other policy, or amounts to improper professional conduct.

Eligibility

This policy, like the Act, covers all employees in the Trust, contractors, volunteers, agency staff and placement students.

Provisions

This policy describes the circumstances in which concerns can be reported confidentially or 'disclosed', and the conditions which must be met if the protection offered by the Act is to apply.

Safeguards for Whistleblowers

The school will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect employees when they raise a concern in good faith.

Qualifying disclosures may be made to the employer or via internal procedures.

A qualifying disclosure will be a protected disclosure where: it is made to the employer either directly or by procedures authorised by the employer for that purpose; or it is made to another person whom the worker reasonably believes to be solely or mainly responsible for the relevant failure; and the employee acts in good faith.

A qualifying disclosure will be a protected disclosure where: it is made to a person or body which has been prescribed by the Secretary of State for the purpose of receiving disclosures about the matter concerned; the employee believes that the matter falls within the description of matters for which the person or body has been prescribed; the employee reasonably believes that the information and any allegation it contains are substantially true; the employee makes the disclosure in good faith.

Qualifying disclosures may be made to a legal adviser.

A qualifying disclosure will be a protected disclosure where it is made to a legal adviser in the course of obtaining legal advice.

Qualifying disclosures may be made to a Government Minister.

A qualifying disclosure will be a protected disclosure where it is made by an employee of a

Government appointed organisation such as a non-departmental public body to a Government Minister either directly or via departmental officials it is made in good faith.

Qualifying disclosures may be made to a prescribed person.

(See Appendix A for a list of prescribed persons and the matters for which they are prescribed.)

Qualifying disclosures may be made to others not listed above.

A qualifying disclosure will only be a protected disclosure where:

- the employee reasonably believes that the information and any allegation it contains are substantially true;
- the employee makes the disclosure in good faith;
- the employee does not act for personal gain;
- the employee reasonably believes that he/she/they would be subjected to a detriment by his/her/their employer if disclosure were to be made to the employer or to a prescribed person;
- in the absence of an appropriate prescribed person, the employee reasonably believed that the disclosure to the employer would result in the destruction or concealment of information about the wrongdoing;
- the employee had previously disclosed substantially the same information to his/her/their employer or to a prescribed person;
- it is reasonable for the employee to make the disclosure;

An employment tribunal will decide whether the employee acted reasonably in the circumstances but in particular will consider:

- the identity of the person to whom the disclosure was made e.g. it may be more likely to be considered reasonable to disclose to a professional body that has responsibility for standards and conduct in a particular field rather than to the media;
- the seriousness of the relevant failure;
- whether the relevant failure is continuing or is likely to occur again;
- whether the disclosure breaches the employer's duty of confidentiality to others;
- what action has or might reasonably be expected to have been taken if a disclosure was made previously to the employer or a prescribed person;
- whether the employee complied with any internal procedures approved by the employer if a disclosure was made previously to the employer.

Qualifying disclosures may be made about exceptionally serious failures and in these cases employees do not need to go through the normal channels and can publicly 'blow the whistle' straight away.

However, it is not enough for something to be an 'exceptionally serious failure' in the employee's opinion alone e.g. if he/she/they does/do not agree with a working practice. It must be a matter of fact that something is a genuinely serious failure. An example could be an exceptionally serious health and safety issue that is putting employees or others' lives at risk.

Making a public disclosure e.g. to the media, is a serious matter and employees should get professional advice to confirm that the matter could be classed as an 'exceptionally serious failure' before taking such action.

A qualifying disclosure will be a protected disclosure where:

- the employee reasonably believes that the information and any allegation it contains are substantially true;
- the employee makes the disclosure in good faith;

- the employee does not act for personal gain;
- it is reasonable for the worker to make the disclosure in view of all the circumstances, having regard in particular to the identity of the person to whom the disclosure is made.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence employees or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that might affect them.

Any provision in an agreement between employee and employer which would prevent the employee from making disclosures protected by the new provisions is void.

Employees do not have to raise a grievance in order to make a protected disclosure. The statutory minimum grievance procedures apply to a protected disclosure only if the employee actually intends that the disclosure constitutes raising the matter with his employer as a grievance.

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal an employee's identity if they so wish. At the appropriate time, however, he/she/they may need to come forward as a witness. Employees reporting concerns also have a duty to observe this confidentiality.

Anonymous Allegations

Employees are encouraged to put their name to their allegation wherever possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the Trust. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be considered will include:

- the seriousness of the issue raised;
- the credibility of the concern;
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

Untrue Allegations

It should be noted that in making a disclosure the employee must have reasonable belief that the information disclosed tends to show a relevant failure as listed above. If an employee makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against him/her/them. If, however, an employee makes an allegation frivolously, maliciously, or for personal gain, disciplinary action may follow.

Raising a concern

If an employee reasonably believes that he/she/they has/have discovered serious malpractice within the school he/she/they should ideally raise these concerns with his/her/their line manager (if appropriate) who would take the matter to the School Leader, or directly with School Leader in the absence of an alternative line manager.

However, if, for whatever reason this is not possible or appropriate, the employee should contact the Executive Principal directly.

If the employee suspects that the Executive Principal may be involved in the malpractice, then he/she/they should contact the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

If the employee suspects/ also suspects involvement by the CEO, then he/she/they should contact the Chair of the Trust Board or Vice Chair if it also involves, or relates to the Chair.

Employees will be given the opportunity to discuss their suspicions with the appropriate investigating officer who will arrange for an investigation to take place.

Who the investigating officer might be, will depend upon the circumstances of the concern and the individual(s) whom the employee suspects may be involved. Whoever is appointed must have suitable impartiality and appropriate seniority in the organisation. Under certain circumstances an external investigating officer may be appointed.

Within ten working days of the initial meeting, the investigating officer will write to confirm the details of the concern and that an investigation will take place.

Throughout the investigation, the complainant will be kept informed of progress and will normally be advised of the eventual outcome, subject to third party rights.

If a meeting is needed, it may be arranged off site, if desired, and a union representative or a friend may accompany the complainant.

Although records will need to be kept as the enquiries progress, these will be of an anonymous nature.

There can be no prescribed time limits for completion of the investigative process, but it will obviously be in the interests of all concerned if the issue is resolved without delay.

If the complainant has any concerns about the way in which the investigation is being handled, then he/she/they should raise this with the designated investigating officer in the first instance. If the complaint remains unresolved then the complainant may contact the Diocesan Director of Education or County Improvement Manager with his/her/their concerns.

When the investigation is complete, a report will be presented to the Chair of Trustees who will decide upon the appropriate course of action.

Subject to any relevant legal constraints, the complainant will be informed of the action to be taken. If the complainant does not agree with the outcome then he/she/they will have seven days in which to make his/her concerns known to the Trust Board, via the Chair of Trustees.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response from the Board of Trustees, then he/she/they may consider contacting the Secretary of State for Education, who has the power to intervene if the Board of Trustees appears to be acting unreasonably. The complainant should be aware, however, that this course of action could have serious implications.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF PRESCRIBED PERSONS (and organisations)

Bishop Rawle C.E. Primary School

School Leader: Miss Averil Kirk – akirk@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

The Valley Primary School

School Leader: Mrs Charlotte Bould – cbould@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

Dilhorne Endowed C.E. Primary School

School Leader: Mr Craig Broome – cbroome@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

Great Wood Primary School

School Leader: Mr Ben Adamson – badamson@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

St. Werburgh's C.E. Primary School

School Leader: Miss Natalie Ainsworth – nainsworth@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

Hollinsclough C.E. Primary Academy

School Leader: Mrs Lynda O'Sullivan – losullivan@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

Manifold C.E. Primary Academy

Executive Principal: Mrs Kelly Stanesby – kstanesby@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

The Moorlands Primary Federation

Chair of Trust Board: Mr Nick Chesters – nchesters@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

Vice Chair of Trust Board: Mr Lee Yates – lyates@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

Chair of Human Resources and Finance Committee: Mr John Ratcliffe – jratcliffe@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

Deputy Trust Business Manager: Mrs Maureen Eyden – meyden@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

Trust Business Manager: Mrs Sandra Carr – scarr@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

Executive Principal (Manifold C.E. Primary Academy) – Mrs K. Stanesby kstanesby@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

Executive Principal (Dilhorne Endowed C.E. Primary, Great Wood Primary, The Valley Primary):

Mr A. Brayford – abrayford@tmpf.staffs.sch.uk

Chief Executive Officer and Executive Principal (Bishop Rawle C.E. Primary, Hollinsclough C.E. Academy and St. Werburgh's C.E. Primary): Mr Jared Eccles – jeccles@tmpf.staff.sch.uk

The Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd – The proper conduct of public business, value for money, fraud and corruption in local government.

PSAA Limited

3rd Floor

Local Government House Smith Square

London, SW1P 3HZ

The Charity Commissioners for England and Wales – The proper administration of charities and of funds given or held for charitable purposes.

whistleblowing@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk

Children's Commissioner – Matters relating to the views and interests of children.

Children's Commissioner for England

Sanctuary Buildings

20 Great Smith Street

London SW1P 3BT

Health and Safety Executive – Matters which may affect the health and safety of any individual at work; matters which may affect the health and Safety of any member of the public arising out of or in connection with the activities of persons at work. After referring to the relevant School Leaders then Principal then CEO you can contact TMPF health and safety providers, Elite, Senior Office Administrator: admin@elitesie.co.uk. 01543 574824.

Information Commissioner – Compliance with the requirements of legislation relating to data protection and to freedom of information.

The Office of the Information Commissioner

Wycliffe House

Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF

01625 545700

If you belong to a recognised trade union or professional association you can get support and assistance from them or if you prefer to seek independent, external advice this can be obtained from the charity Public Concern at Work or the Audit Commission at:

Public Concern at Work

Suite 306

16 Baldwins Gardens

London EC1N 7RJ

Helpline: 020 7404 6609

E-mail: helpline@pcaw.co.uk

Audit Commission

1 Vincent Square

London SW1P 2PN

Telephon: 020 7828 1212

E-mail: enquiries@audit-commission.gov.uk

How to complain about a school to Ofsted

Your complaint must relate to the school as a whole, and you must have followed the school's complaints procedure. Ofsted cannot:

- consider issues about individual pupils;
- investigate specific incidents;
- judge how well a school responded to a complaint;
- mediate or resolve disputes between you and the school;
- consider complaints if there are other legal ways to pursue them (for example, complaints about admissions or providing education for individual pupils with special educational needs).

You can [complain to Ofsted](#) if you think a school is not run properly. You must have already followed the school's complaints procedure. You should get a response within 30 working days. It will tell you if Ofsted will investigate or not, and why.

<https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints>

Contacting the Department for Education

You can [complain to the Department for Education \(DfE\)](#) directly if:

- a child is at risk;
- a child is missing school;
- the school is stopping you from following its complaints procedure.

Telephone: 0370 000 2288
Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Contacting the Police

Contact your local police 101 if you think a child/adult is at risk and 999 if a child/adult is in immediate danger.

Staffordshire County Council

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Report/Report.aspx>

Tel: 0800 731 1890