Whistleblowing Policy

Updated September 2026

Introduction

1. All schools/preschools and academy trusts are required to have appropriate procedures in place for handling whistleblowing and for ensuring school staff and volunteers know who they can contact if they wish to raise a concern.

2. This document explains the types of concerns that can be raised under this procedure, the legal protection for whistle-blowers and how whistleblowing concerns will be handled.

3. This procedure should be followed for any whistleblowing matters raised by employees of Little Cuckoos, volunteers, supply staff and agency workers.

Policy Statement

4. Wiltshire Council and the school are committed to the highest possible standards of:
   - openness and inclusiveness
   - accountability and
   - integrity.

What is Whistleblowing?

5. Whistleblowing is when an employee or volunteer raises concerns about poor or unsafe practice, misconduct and/or potential failures in Little Cuckoos' systems and processes.

6. The wrongdoing disclosed must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others, e.g., pupils, general public

7. The wrongdoing must relate to or show one of the following:
   - a criminal offence
   - a failure to comply with a legal obligation
   - a possible miscarriage of justice
   - a Health & Safety risk
   - actions causing, or likely to cause damage to the environment
   - misuse of public money
   - corruption or unethical conduct
   - failing to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
   - deliberate concealment of any of these matters
   - any other substantial and relevant concern.

8. The concern could be about something that happened in the past, is currently happening or likely to happen in the future.

9. Concerns or complaints that employees wish to raise formally, about their own employment, should normally be raised using Little Cuckoos' Grievance Procedure, unless the employee believes the concern is in the public interest. This includes for example, concerns related to working conditions, working relations, employment rights or bullying or harassment.

Aim of procedure

10. Encourage those working and volunteering in the Little Cuckoos to report suspected wrongdoing promptly, in the knowledge that it will be taken seriously.

11. Provide guidance on how to raise concerns

12. Reassure staff that they are able to raise genuine concerns made in the public interest without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken

13. Appropriate whistleblowing procedures should be put in place for such concerns to be raised with Little Cuckoos' senior leadership team.

Legal protection for whistle blowers

14. It can be difficult for an employee or worker to make the decision to report a concern. If a concern is raised in good faith and based on reasonable belief, there should be nothing to fear.

15. Little Cuckoos will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect an individual when they raise a concern even if they are genuinely mistaken in their concerns. Any harassment or victimisation of a whistleblower would result in disciplinary action against the person responsible.

16. Under The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998, workers are protected from dismissal or other detriment as long as they follow their employer's whistleblowing procedure. Any investigations arising from whistleblowing will not influence or be influenced by any other procedures to which an employee may be subject.

False and malicious allegations

17. Little Cuckoos will protect itself and its employees from false and malicious expressions of concern by taking disciplinary action where appropriate. Little Cuckoos will try to ensure that the negative impact of either malicious or unfounded allegation about any person is minimised.

Procedure for raising a whistleblowing concern

18. Whistleblowing anonymously or confidentially

19. Concerns can be raised anonymously, but the school/preschool or person receiving the allegation may not be able to take it further if they haven't been provided with all the information they need.

20. Whistle blowers can give their name but request confidentiality and, in these circumstances, every effort will be made to protect their identity.

21. Where an employee has requested that their identity is not to be revealed, Little Cuckoos will discuss the matter with them before embarking on any course of action whereby their identity will need to be disclosed.

22. All disclosures made under this procedure will be treated sensitively, consistently, and fairly.

Step 1- Reporting the concern

23. Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing.

24. Whistleblowing concerns should be raised with the school's senior leadership team. In Little Cuckoos, this is:

HAYLEY MCMAHON (Manager)
VICKY SMITH (Deputy Manager)

25. Where a whistleblowing concern is about Manager, concerns may be raised with the Chairperson. In Little Cuckoos, this is:

ARRAN BENNETT (Committee Chairperson)

25. Where a staff member or volunteer feels unable to raise an issue with their employer, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels are open to them:

26. If you wish to report the matter to someone outside of the school, you can contact:

- the Head of School Effectiveness at Wiltshire Council or
- any of the other local authority officers listed in Annex 1 or
- one of the external bodies/organisations listed in Annex 2.
- the NSPCC's whistleblowing helpline – it is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally, or have concerns about the way a concern is being handled by their school or college. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

27. Reporting concerns to the media, in most cases will lead to the loss of your whistleblowing law rights.

28. Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of your concerns, you will need to demonstrate that you have sufficient evidence or other reasonable grounds to raise them.

29. You may wish to obtain advice from a trade union representative or the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

30. You can be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague to any meetings that are required.

Step 2

31. The person with whom you have raised your concern, will decide what action is needed. They may ask you to provide further information. They will write to you within 10 working days to let you know how your concern will be dealt with.

32. The information you can expect to receive is:
    - an indication of how the concern will be dealt with
    - an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
    - whether any initial enquiries have been made
    - whether further investigations will take place, and if not why
    - information about support available for you.

33. The person with whom you have raised your concern will at the same time notify the schools' HR Adviser that a whistleblowing allegation has been made.

34. Advice on dealing with concerns is available from the school's HR Adviser, legal or financial adviser.

Step 3

35. Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate.

36. An investigation may be carried out, depending on the nature of the allegations and the evidence/information presented. Full details of the investigation may be withheld from you to protect the confidentiality of other people.

37. Information will need to be passed on to those with a legitimate need to have this information and it may be necessary for you to provide a written statement and act as a witness in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings or enquiry. This will be discussed with you first.

38. Where an investigation is necessary, it may take the form of one or more of the following:
    - an internal investigation by the head teacher or a governor, which may, for example, take the form of a disciplinary investigation
    - an investigation by the Internal Audit Service
    - a referral to the Police
    - the setting up of an external independent inquiry.

Step 4

39. You will be informed of the outcome of any investigation, in writing, and/or of any action taken, subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the law.

40. If you do not feel your concern has been addressed adequately you may raise it with an independent body such as:
    - the Head of School Effectiveness at Wiltshire Council or
    - any of the other local authority officers listed in Annex 1 or
    - one of the external bodies/organisations listed in Annex 2.

41. If there is an issue of an exceptionally serious nature which you believe to be substantially true, then you may disclose the issue to someone other than those listed in paragraph 26. In determining whether it is reasonable for you to have made a disclosure the identity of the person to whom the disclosure is made will be taken into account. Disclosures to anyone outside of the recognised bodies listed in paragraphs 28 and Annex 1 and 2 may not be protected disclosures under the Act.

42. You have a duty to Little Cuckoos not to disclose confidential information. This does not prevent you from seeking independent advice at any stage or from discussing the issue with the charity Protect (previously called Public Concern at Work) on 020 3117 2520 or www.protect-advice.org.uk in accordance with the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Review and Reporting of the Procedure

43. For maintained and voluntary controlled schools/preschools Human Resources have overall responsibility for this procedure.

44. For voluntary aided and foundation schools/preschools the responsibility will lie with the Governing Body, and for academies with the Academy Trust.

45. This procedure has been reviewed with reference to equalities, human rights and discrimination legislation. Confidential monitoring of the procedures is undertaken in order to gather data to help establish whether the procedure is operated in a fair and consistent manner. In undertaking monitoring the school will not identify individuals.

46. This procedure will be regularly reviewed by the HR Department to ensure that it continues to remain compliant and meets the needs of schools and those working in schools.

Annex 1 - Contact list for Wiltshire County Council

Address:	Wiltshire Council, County Hall
HR Operations Manager	Jane.margetts@wiltshire.gov.uk
Director of Education and Skills	kathryn.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk
Head of School Effectiveness	amanda.butler@wiltshire.gov.uk
Health and Safety Team for Schools	sanjay.dhir@wiltshire.gov.uk
Strategic Financial Support Manager Finance & Procurement	Grant.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk

Annex 2 - External bodies and organisations

You can blow the whistle to an external organisation rather than your employer. There is a list of prescribed people or bodies that you can go to.

Choose the correct one for your issue. A full list can be found online at Gov.uk: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies

Some of the bodies that may be relevant for school staff are:

- **Ofsted**
  WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
  Tel: 0300 123 3155
  Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk

- **Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation**
  Complaints Investigation Manager, Ofqual, Earlsdon Park, 53-55 Butts Road, Coventry, CV1 3BH.
  Tel: 0300 303 3344
  Email: whistleblowing@ofqual.gov.uk
  Online reform form: www.ofqual.gov.uk/complaints-and-appeals/whistleblowing/

- **National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)**
  The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line is for anyone with child protection concerns in the workplace. The helpline provides support and advice to those who feel unable to get a child protection issue addressed by their employer. It can be contacted anonymously on 0800 028 0285.
  NSPCC's whistleblowing helpline

- **Health and Safety Executive**
  Tel: 0300 790 6787
  www.hse.gov.uk

- **The Local Government Ombudsman**
  Address: PO Box 4771, Coventry. CV4 0EH
  www.lgo.org.uk
  Tel: 0300 061 0614

- **Data Protection and Freedom of Information**
  The Office of the Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, SK9 5AF
  Tel: 0303 123 1113

- **Secretary of State for Education**
  Ministerial and Public Communications Division, Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
  Tel: 0370 000 2288
  Website: www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

- **Equality and Human Rights Commission**
  Tel: 0161 829 8100
  Email: whistleblowing@equalityhumanrights.com
  Website: www.equalityhumanrights.com/whistleblowing