Cheadle Primary School

Whistleblowing Policy

September 2026

(Adopted from SCC Policy v 0.2 April 2026)

1. Statement from the Chief Executive

Cheadle Primary School want our workforce to be ambitious, courageous, and empowered to do a great job and make a positive difference to the lives of the people we serve.

To support this, we want a positive working environment and a culture of confidence, respect and equality. When things do not go to plan, it is important we resolve issues in the right way for all involved.

Our People Policies provide managers and colleagues with clear yet flexible guidance to deal with those issues quickly and fairly.

2. Guiding Principals

We are committed to developing policies and processes that reflect our People Strategy, our values and contribute to promoting a positive working environment.

Our principals therefore comprise:

- Encouraging adult-to-adult conversations where everyone acts to address workplace concerns early through 1-2-1's, supervision and other day-to-day conversations.
- Being supportive, proactive and solution focused, addressing concerns quickly and fairly, tailored to individual needs.
- Recognising that everyone has a responsibility and role to play in creating the right conditions to do their job well.
- Focusing on wellbeing and building trust within the workplace.
- Developing policies that support diversity and inclusion and promote an inclusive work environment free from any form of discrimination, bullying, harassment, or victimisation.
- Holding ourselves and each other to account to always behave and act in the best interests of the school, council and people of Staffordshire.

2. Purpose

The aim of this policy is to encourage and enable you to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon concerns. It provides you with a clear avenue to raise concerns and sets out how we will deal with them and communicate with you.

It aims to ensure everyone feels able to raise any genuine concern in the knowledge that it will be taken seriously, and that they will be protected from repercussions. Those working for or on behalf of the council must not treat individuals detrimentally because they have made a qualifying disclosure (i.e. Page 4 of 11 Whistleblowing Policy v.02 blow the whistle) under the Employee Rights Act 1996, including Public Disclosure Act 1998.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees and workers employed by us including contractors, subcontractors, and agency workers. Other individuals, including our volunteers, suppliers and those genuinely self-employed are also encouraged to follow the procedure set out in this policy.

This policy has been implemented following consultation with our recognised Trade Unions.

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time in consultation with recognised trade unions.

Where a colleague has a concern with their own treatment at work or in relation to their contract of employment, it is usually appropriate that they raise it under either the Resolving Grievance Policy or Anti-Harassment & Bullying Policy. We will however consider if there are any exceptional circumstances in which we feel it appropriate to deal with it under the terms of this policy. Concerns relating to sexual harassment may be raised under this policy, where there is a public interest in disclosure or a failure of the organisation to address such issues. If you are unsure about whether your concerns are best dealt with under the Whistleblowing Policy or another policy, please contact your HR Provider for further advice.

Decisions will be made in line with the school's local scheme of delegation or equivalent mechanism for making decisions at the appropriate level.

4. What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when you report certain types of wrongdoing which relate to risk or malpractice. This could well be something you've seen at work – though not always. The wrongdoing you disclose is often seen as something which is in the 'public interest'.

The following are the types of complaints that count as whistleblowing:

- A criminal offence, and/or
- A miscarriage of justice: and/or
- Risk or actual damage to the environment; and/or
- A failure to comply with a legal obligation; and/or
- A risk to the health and safety of an individual; and/or
- Sexual harassment, or a failure to prevent or address sexual harassment in the workplace, and/or
- You believe someone is covering up any of the above

5. Rights and Protection of the Whistle-blower

The school and council aim to encourage openness and will support you if you raise genuine concerns under this Policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

In turn, to be protected by whistleblowing laws against detrimental treatment or dismissal, you must reasonably believe that the wrongdoing (as outlined above) is being, has been, or is likely to be committed and that your 'disclosure' is in the public interest. Examples of detrimental treatment include dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavorable treatment connected with raising a concern.

If you believe that you have been subjected to a detriment for raising such a complaint you should raise the matter with the Chair of Governing Body. If you believe that the Chair of Governing Body has subjected you to a detriment you should raise the matter to the

Assistant Director for Education Strategy and Improvement at Staffordshire County Council.

Victimisation of a whistle-blower by any other colleague, for raising a concern under this policy will constitute a disciplinary offence.

False allegations raised maliciously may lead to disciplinary action or a referral made to any relevant regulatory body if you are not an employee.

We will take all reasonable steps to minimise any difficulties that you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are asked to give evidence in a criminal or disciplinary proceedings, we will arrange for you to receive appropriate advice and support.

6. **The process**

Step 1 Raising a Whistleblowing concern

As soon as you become reasonably concerned, we hope you feel able to raise it. The earlier you raise your concern, the easier it is to take action.

You should raise your concern in the first instance, at any time, with either the nominated member of staff (e.g. Head Teacher/Deputy Head) or governor who is appointed as a contact for Whistleblowing concerns. For this school these roles are undertaken by [Insert names or roles here] (see key contacts). If the whistleblowing concerns involve the nominated member of staff or governor, you should raise your concern directly to the Chair of Governing Body.

If your whistleblowing concerns relate to the Chair of the Governing Body, your concerns should be directed to the Assistant Director for Education at Staffordshire County Council. If your whistleblowing complaint relates to a local authority service provided to the school, you should direct it to the Assistant Director for Education Strategy and Improvement for Staffordshire County Council (see key contacts section) who will ensure it is raised through the appropriate internal process.

It could be something that has happened, is happening now or you believe will happen in the near future.

You can raise your concern verbally, or in writing. If you are emailing, particularly using an external email (i.e. your personal email) we strongly recommend that you secure the email by password protection with encryption and share the password by alternate method.

We recommend that you use our form to raise a whistleblowing concern. This will help you provide us with the information that we need to properly look at the concerns. Take care to ensure the accuracy of the information.

It is important that you set out clearly:

- What the concern is and to whom it relates

- The background and history of the concern – giving relevant dates and any evidence you may have
- The reason you are particularly concerned about the situation and why you believe the information to be true.

You are encouraged to put your name on any concern you raise as it makes it easier for the school or council to investigate it. If you have difficulty at any stage of this procedure either

- Because of a disability or
- Because English is not your first language You should discuss the situation with the nominated member of staff or governor as soon as possible, so that suitable support can be explored.

Step 2 Responding to your whistleblowing concern

On receipt of your 'disclosure' or concern, the nominated member of staff or governor will acknowledge its receipt, in writing to you, ideally within 5 working days. They will also seek advice and support via their HR or Legal Provider.

In some cases, they may need to ask you to attend a meeting to clarify the nature of your concern. This will be arranged as soon as possible. You may, if you wish, bring a colleague or a trade union representative with you to the meeting.

Where it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting, we may conduct the process remotely, for example using Microsoft Teams. We will ensure that you have access to the necessary technology for participating.

The nominated member of staff or governor will decide if an investigation is required or any other appropriate actions. For example, refer to another policy, the local authority audit/fraud team or the Local Authority Designated Officer (see key contacts section).

The level of investigation and time this will take will vary depending on the nature of the suspected wrongdoing hence it is not possible to lay down precise timescales. However, at the outset of this process you and the nominated member of staff or governor will agree how and when communication will take place so that you are kept updated on progress.

Following the investigation, a report will be produced outlining findings, for the nominated member of staff or governor to decide any appropriate next steps, including whether it is appropriate to commence a disciplinary process.

They will endeavour to inform you of the outcome of our enquiries and/or investigations, however, given confidentiality and other relevant aspects and legal constraints, it may not be possible to share details of the outcome and any action taken.

Step 3 If you are dissatisfied with the outcome

The school hope that you will be satisfied with the way your concerns are treated and any investigations that may be carried out.

However, if you are not, and you feel it is right to take the matter externally, i.e. outside the school, please find below a list of possible contacts. If you tell a prescribed person or body, it must be one that deals with the issue you are raising.

- A list of external regulatory organisations, such as the Secretary of State for Education or relevant professional bodies can be found at the following government website. Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- A disclosure about child protection and safeguarding concern can be raised directly with the local authority LADO, if not already raised. Similarly, if the matter relates to fraud you can raise it directly to the local authority's Fraud Team.
- The charity, Protect, can advise you about raising the concern externally. This will include advising who the appropriate prescribed regulator is. We always encourage you to raise your whistleblowing concerns internally in the first instance. However, the law recognizes that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media and as such you will not have protection under whistleblowing laws if you choose to make contact with the media unless certain conditions are met.

We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. If you would like independent advice at any stage, you can contact the independent charity Protect. They should be able to give you free and confidential advice about how to raise a concern about serious malpractice at work. If you are a trade union member, your union may also be able to provide you with appropriate advice.

8. Confidentiality and Anonymity

We hope that you to feel able to raise a whistleblowing concern openly under this policy.

Where you raise a whistleblowing concern openly, we will maintain your confidentiality as far as possible. If we need to identify your identity to anyone, we will notify you beforehand and we will discuss with you whether and how we can proceed.

As an alternative, you may decide to raise a whistleblowing concern anonymously. We encourage anonymous reporting over remaining silent. Although we will investigate any concern that is reported anonymously, as best we can, an anonymous report is likely to be more difficult for us to investigate and we will not be in a position to provide you with any feedback. We will consider the seriousness of the issues raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

9. Wellbeing and Support

Supporting wellbeing is an integral and essential part of our People Policies. We recognise that whistleblowing processes can be stressful for everyone involved. We all respond to stressful situations in different ways. Sometimes a process may cause distress and impact on both physical and mental health.

Where schools buy in to the Councils Health and Safety service this provides access to Wellbeing support via the SLN (Staffordshire Learning Net). This contains information and resources and provides ideas and solutions to help support your own wellbeing as well as providing advice for your school management.

More general wellbeing advice and information can be found at MIND and Mental Health Foundation.

10. Data Protection and Confidentiality

Our aim is to deal with whistleblowing matters sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of any individuals involved. All employees must treat as confidential any information communicated to them in connection with such a complaint. Breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action.

If you are invited to a formal meeting, you must not make any electronic recordings. An exception to this may be where it has been agreed by all parties as a reasonable adjustment related to a disability. Any breach of this provision may lead to disciplinary action, which could include dismissal or referral to any relevant regulatory body.

We process personal data collected during whistleblowing complaints/investigations in accordance with the schools privacy notice and data protection policy.

11. Related Policies

This policy is part of a suite of people policies and other related policies that you may wish to read are as set out below:

- Resolving Grievances Policy
- Appeals Procedure
- Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy
- Disciplinary Policy

12. Further Advice

If you need any further information about any aspect of this policy, please initially speak to your nominated member of staff or governor for whistleblowing concerns. Your HR Provider will also be able to provide additional clarification and advice in respect of this policy.

13. Reviewing the Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually unless there is a requirement to do so before due to legislative or best practice changes.

14. Community Impact Analysis

We consider carefully how the decisions we make affect people who share different protected characteristics (race, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, religion, belief, sexual orientation, age, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity).

The Community Impact Analysis, available to support this policy, highlights the proactive and positive approach we take to supporting employees who may raise a whistleblowing complaint, whilst taking into consideration any employee protected characteristics.

The completed community impact analysis to support this policy is available on request.

15. Key Contacts

Our school

Nominated member of staff for Whistleblowing complaints: Mrs Rachel Bailye (rbailye@cheadle-primary.staffs.sch.uk Tel: 01538 714890).

Nominated governor for Whistleblowing complaints: Sean Woodward (swoodward@cheadle-primary.staffs.sch.uk)

Staffordshire Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 0300 111 8007 or use the online enquiry form at the following website. Website details: www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Care-for-children-andfamilies/Childprotection/rc-Professional.aspx

Staffordshire County Council's Audit Team: Fraud Email: fraud@staffordshire.gov.uk Integrity Hotline: 0800 73118 Website details: www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Your-council-and-democracy/Reportfraud-bribery-and-theft/Online-reporting-form.aspx

Protect Charity: Protect - Speak up stop harm - Protect - Speak up stop harm (protect-advice.org.uk) Protect Advice line: 0203 117 2520

Staffordshire County Council: Assistant Director for Education Strategy and Improvement: Mr Tim Moss (as at January 2024) Contact details: tim.moss@staffordshire.gov.uk

16. Version History

Version:	V.02		
Issue Date:	April 2026	**Review Date:**	
Author(s):	People Services – Rachel Kirstenfeldt		
Owner:	Sarah Getley – Head of People Services		

Version	Author (s)	Reason for Change	Date
v.01	People Services – operations	Introduction of revised policy as part of the reimagined People Policies	January 2024
v.02	People Services – operations	Sexual harassment added to protected disclosures under Employment Act 2025	6 April 2026