**CHESNUT LODGE SCHOOL**

**WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY**

Based on Halton Borough Council Whistle-blowing Policy February 2017

* 1. Individuals working within or for an organisation are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within it. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the organisation. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.
  2. Whistle-blowing is the term used when someone who works within or for an organisation raises a concern about a possible fraud, crime, danger or other serious risk that could threaten customers, colleagues, the public or the organisation’s own reputation. Blowing the whistle is more formally known as 'making a disclosure in the public interest'.
  3. Chesnut Lodge School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees, and any others such as agency staff, volunteers or contractors who have serious concerns about any aspect of Chesnut Lodge School’s work, to come forward and voice those concerns.
  4. This policy sets out the ways in which individuals may raise concerns that they have and explains how those concerns will be dealt with. It also gives protection to the person raising concerns.
  5. The policy applies to all employees, ex-employees (within 3 months of cessation of their employment with Halton Borough Council), volunteers or contractors working for Chesnut Lodge School on the school premises, for example, agency staff, builders and drivers.
  6. This policy has been developed taking into account:
* The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which protects whistle- blowers who report concerns*,* from subsequent harassment, victimisation and other unfair treatment arising out of the disclosure. The Act is incorporated into the Employment Rights Act 1996, which already protects employees who take action over, or raise concern about, health and safety at work.
* The sections of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 relating to protected disclosures.
  1. This policy has been discussed with the relevant trade unions and has their support. (Halton BC)

**AIMS OF THIS POLICY**

**2.1 This policy aims to:**

* encourage individuals to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice and procedures;
* provide avenues for individuals to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
* ensure that individuals receive a response to their concerns and are aware of how to pursue them if not satisfied;
* reassure individuals that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation from those working within or for Chesnut Lodge School if they have a reasonable belief that they have made any disclosure in good faith.

2.2 The Policy of Conduct for Local Government Employees states that:

*“Employees will be expected through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of service. Employees must report to the appropriate manager any impropriety or breach of procedure.”*

2.3 This policy supports that statement.

**SCOPE OF THIS POLICY**

3.1 It is important to know the difference between a ‘Whistle-blow’ and a ‘grievance.’ A Whistle-blow has a public interest aspect to it, as it puts at risk others. A grievance by contrast has no public interest factors, as it is a complaint about a particular employment situation. A grievance should be reported using the Grievance Policy, not this policy.

3.2 This policy is not a substitute for and does not replace other relevant policies within Chesnut Lodge School. Where the concerns raised relate to a breach of one of those policies they will be investigated under that policy. This policy is not intended to be used where other more appropriate procedures are available, for example:

* Disciplinary Procedure
* Child and Adult Safeguarding Policies and Procedures
* Dignity at Work Policy
* Grievance Procedure
* Single Equalities Scheme
* Corporate Complaints Policy
  1. Specific examples of concerns that could be raised under this policy, if a reasonable belief that one or more of them may have occurred, could include:
* Concerns relating to matters covered by internal school policies and procedures, such as;
* Actions or behaviour that make you feel uncomfortable in terms of falling below established standards of practice or which amount to improper conduct
* Actions in breach of Chesnut Lodge School’s policies;
* Damage to the environment;
* Dangerous procedures or practices risking health and safety, including risks to the public, service users and to other employees;
* Other unethical conduct;

Concerns relating to matters that may, following investigation, need to be dealt with under policies and procedures external to Chesnut Lodge School, such as;

* Conduct which is a criminal offence or a breach of the law;
* Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice;
* The unauthorised use of public funds;
* Fraud and corruption;
* Sexual or physical abuse of service users;
* Other unethical conduct;
  1. These are known as qualifying disclosures under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
  2. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but gives examples of potential malpractice. The overriding concern should be that it is in the public interest for the potential malpractice to be corrected and sanctions taken if need be.
  3. This policy will be referenced where relevant and made available for inspection and use as part of the awarding of any School /Council contracts.

**4.0 SAFEGUARDS AND PROTECTION**

4.1 Chesnut Lodge School recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. Chesnut Lodge School will not tolerate any harassment, victimisation (including informal pressures), disadvantage, detrimental action or deliberate failure to act. Chesnut Lodge School will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern which you have a reasonable belief to be in the public interest and has disciplinary policies, including those on Harassment & Bullying at Work, which are

designed to protect Whistle-blowers from all forms of harassment in the workplace

4.2 Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will normally not be interrupted by any employment procedures that may already be underway. It is not Chesnut Lodge School's intention to delay action taken under the disciplinary or other policies, pending the completion of investigations taken in accordance with this policy, unless Chesnut Lodge School considers that the merits of a particular case

warrant this, or unless the matter becomes a police matter which prevent further internal processes.

4.3 In all cases, the provisions of The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) will be adhered to. However, the Enterprise & Regulatory Reform Act (ERRA) introduces a Public Interest test requirement on Whistle-blowers. In order to receive the protection of PIDA, whistle-blowers will be required to show that they reasonably believed that the disclosure they are making is in the Public Interest. This should be

done through the evidence they present when raising their concern. The procedure for making allegations is set out in Section 7 of this policy. Further information on the ERRA can be found at [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

4.4 If you make an allegation that you reasonably believe to be in the public interest, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If it is found, however, during the investigation that an allegation has been made vexatiously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

4.5 As a whistle blower you are also given legal protection by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. If you make what is known as a “qualifying disclosure” under the 1998 Act to your employer or certain other persons/bodies, and you act reasonably and in the public interest, it will be unlawful to subject you to any

detriment.

4.6 If your case progresses to an Employment Tribunal, compensation may be awarded to you if Chesnut Lodge School breaches the 1998 Act, following a successful claim for ‘detrimental treatment’. Compensation may be reduced however if the allegation was not made in good faith.

**5.0 CONFIDENTIALITY**

5.1 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish (subject to any legal requirements or decisions). This cannot be guaranteed however if you need to come forward as a witness. For example, if a hearing is needed, either by law, or under a school procedure, the employee disclosing the concern may be required to give evidence.

5.2 The employee disclosing a concern should ensure that they only inform the person(s) identified in part 7 below.

5.3 If the nature of the whistle blow requires disclosure to other people to conduct an investigation, then the employee who originally disclosed this will be informed.

**6.0 ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS**

6.1 This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation and receive the protection of PIDA whenever possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered where there is enough detail to justify further investigation.

6.2 Any anonymous concerns or allegations received under this policy will be referred to the Headteacher and will be logged and investigated as far as possible under the process outlined in section 8 of this policy.

**7.0 HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN**

7.1 As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with the Headteacher. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. For example, if you believe that your Headteacher is involved, you should approach the Chair of Governors.

7.2 This individual may also provide advice and guidance on matters of concern under this policy.

7.3 Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Individuals who wish to make a written report are invited to use the following format:

* the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates);
* the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

7.4 The earlier you express the concern the easier it is to take action. Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

7.5 You may invite your trade union, professional association representative or a colleague to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised.

7.6 Wherever possible you should report your concerns or allegations internally. If you are unwilling or unable to report the matter internally there are a number of other agencies you may be able to report your concerns to and which can be accessed by following the link below or by using a search engine to find the Government Guidance on ‘Blowing the Whistle to a Prescribed Person’ (Feb 2016)

List of prescribed people and bodies

7.7 The Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015 amends the Employment Rights Act to require "prescribed persons" under the whistleblowing legislation to produce annual reports on all whistleblowing disclosures made to them. These reports will not contain the names of the people who made the disclosures.

7.8 The full list of prescribed people and bodies is included at Appendix 2.

7.9 Another alternative is to contact the NSPCC. The Whistleblowing Advice Line offers free advice and support to professionals with concerns about how child protection issues are being handled in their own or another organisation. The telephone number for the helpline is 0800 02802825 or you can email on [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

7.10 The advice line is not intended to replace any current practices or responsibilities of organisations working with children. The helpline advisors would encourage professionals to raise any concerns about a child to their own employer in the first instance. However, the advice line offers an alternative route if whistleblowing internally is difficult or professionals have concerns around how matters are being handled.

**HOW CHESNUT LODGE SCHOOL WILL RESPOND**

8.1 Chesnut Lodge School will respond to and investigate your concerns. All allegations and concerns raised under this policy will be formally recorded and logged in a secure register held by the Responsible Officer (or their designated representative) identified in section 9 of this policy.

8.2 Matters raised may be:

* Investigated by management
* Progressed through the disciplinary process or other internal procedure
* Referred to the Police
* Referred to the appropriate section of the Local Authority
* The subject of an independent enquiry
* Dealt with via any other appropriate procedure, for example, child protection, abuse of vulnerable adults’ procedure.

8.3 In order to protect anybody accused of misconduct, an initial investigation will be made to decide whether a full investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. If appropriate, Human Resources will be informed.

8.4 Some concerns may be resolved following an initial investigation without the need for full investigation.

8.5 Within ten working days of your concern being raised, you will be invited to a meeting in person to discuss your concern.

8.6 Following this meeting we will write to you:

* indicating how we plan to deal with the matter
* giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a full response
* supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms, for example welfare or Occupational Health

8.7 The amount of contact between you and any officers considering the issues will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided.

8.9 If, following initial investigation, a formal investigation of an allegation is required under this policy, this will be conducted in line with the process set out within Chesnut Lodge School Disciplinary procedure.

8.10 Chesnut Lodge School will minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings Chesnut Lodge School will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure. It is important for whistle-blowers to understand that making a whistle-blowing allegation doesn’t give them an automatic right to anonymity, but does give them protection from harassment or victimisation and that Chesnut Lodge School will not tolerate any form of this from anyone working within or for Chesnut Lodge School.

8.11 Chesnut Lodge School understands that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. We will therefore inform you in writing of the outcome of any investigation unless there is a compelling legal reason not to. A meeting will also be arranged to explain the outcome of the investigation if you so wish.

8.12 If urgent action is required, for example if there is an urgent health and safety or safeguarding concern, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

8.13 This process is set out in the form of a flowchart and attached at Appendix 1 of this

Policy

**9.0 THE RESPONSIBLE OFFICER**

9.1 The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy and will maintain a record of all concerns raised and any outcomes. This record will be in a form which does not compromise your confidentiality and may be officially delegated to a named officer to maintain. The Headteacher will report as necessary to Chesnut Lodge School Governing Body.

**10.0 HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER**

10.1 Chesnut Lodge School hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not satisfied, it is possible to appeal the decision by approaching the Chair of the Governing Body Appeals Committee. A review of the decision will then be taken.

10.2 If, following this, you are still unsatisfied with the outcome of the further investigation and any action taken and if you feel it is right to take the matter outside Chesnut Lodge School, the following are possible contact points:

* the Local Authority
* your local Citizens’ Advice Bureau
* relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
* a relevant voluntary organisation
* the police
* organisations prescribed from time to time by the Secretary of State for the purpose of protected disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act

10.3 The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any potential wrongdoing in the workplace. In the majority of cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

10.4 The law recognises however, that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body, such as a regulator. A list of these agencies and contacts are linked to at paragraph 7.6 and again at Appendix 2.

10.5 If you do take the matter outside Chesnut Lodge School, you should be careful not disclose confidential information, for example such as that covered by the Data Protection Act 1998. We strongly advise that you seek advice before reporting a concern externally. The independent whistle blowing charity, Public Concern at Work operates a confidential hotline (020 7404 6609) and can provide advice as necessary.

**11.0 REVIEW OF THE POLICY**

11.1 Chesnut Lodge School’s Governing Body will keep the policy under review and will make changes to the policy as deemed appropriate following the publication of a new Halton Borough Council Policy (after necessary consultation with interested parties).

*Reviewed by: Mrs H Austin Ratified by governors:*

*Due for review:* *Autumn Term 2021*

*Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(Headteacher)*

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Chair of Governors)*

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| ***Version Control*** | ***Date released*** | ***Date effective*** | ***Approved by*** | ***Amendment*** |
| *1* | *Spring 2017* |  | *Governing body* | *Policy created in line with HBC’s policy* |
| *2* | *Spring 2019* | *Spring 2019* | *Governing Body* | *No amendments required.* |
| *3* | *Autumn 2021* | *Autumn 2021* | *Governing Body* | *Minor amendments* |

**Appendix 1 Chesnut Lodge Whistle Blowing Policy**

If raising anonymous concerns

Concern about malpractice or wrongdoing in the workplace

If unable to raise internally

Write down or give details of the background and history and your reasons for concern

Headteacher

Sent to an organisation listed under Appendix 2 of the Policy

Other officer as identified in section 7.1 of the Policy

Headteacher

or

Officially logged on Whistle Blowing register held by Headteacher

Acknowledgement sent to individual (except in case of anonymous allegations) raining the concern, within 10 days and inviting them to initial meeting to discuss concerns

Initial investigation takes place

Formal investigation

No further action taken

or

If unsatisfied, right of appeal

Individual raising original concern informed of decision in writing

Review of the decision undertaken

Investigation takes place

Individual raising concern informed of review decision

Action taken

No further action needed

or

If still unsatisfied

**Appendix 2**

List of Prescribed People and Bodies for Education related concerns

**Education Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills** (“the

Chief Inspector”) about matters relating to the regulation and inspection of establishment

and agencies for children’s social care services.

Ofsted Piccadilly Gate

Store Street Manchester

M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 3155

Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk

**Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation** about matters in relation to which the

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation exercise functions under the

Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Casework Manager Ofqual

Spring Place

Coventry Business Park

Herald Avenue

Coventry

CV5 6UB Tel: 0300 303 3346

Email: Public.Enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk

Online reform form: www.ofqual.gov.uk/complaints-and-appeals/whistleblowing/.

**Secretary of State for Education** about matters relating to the following educational

institutions in England: Maintained schools; Maintained nursery schools; Independent

schools (including academies and free schools); Non-maintained special schools; Pupil

referral units; Alternative provision academies; 16-19 Academies (and free schools); Sixth

form colleges; Special post-16 institutions.

Ministerial and Public Communications Division

Department for Education Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Tel: 0370 000 2288

Online contact form: www.education.gov.uk/contactus