

## **ROSSMORE SCHOOL WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

### **Introduction**

This procedure has been developed for the use of Rossmore School employees. However it can also be used by agency staff, other people acting in a similar capacity to an employee, by Contractors and their staff and other individuals providing services/support to the School (eg volunteers). The same principles in terms of protection from harassment and victimisation, confidentiality, support and information on the School's response will apply.

As a public service organisation, Rossmore School will use public funds prudently and apply the highest standards of conduct throughout the organisation. This procedure encourages you to help maintain these standards, by enabling you to draw attention to any concerns which you may have about the operation of Cheshire West and Chester Council. Initially the School will seek to deal with your concerns through its internal procedures. Public disclosure may well be justified at some point but you are encouraged not to pursue this angle until the School has had the opportunity to investigate the concern. Premature or unnecessary publicity may impede proper investigations, hurt individuals or damage the School's reputation.

Examples of concerns that may be raised under the procedure are:

- Law breaking
- Miscarriages of justice
- Health and safety risks (to anyone)
- Damage to the environment
- Unauthorised use of money
- Dishonesty, fraud and corruption
- Sexual, physical or financial abuse of clients
- Other unethical conduct

Rossmore School wants normal operational or managerial channels to be sufficiently open and effective for most concerns to be raised that way. But this will not always be appropriate or possible and that is why we have a Confidential Reporting Procedure. It offers the means to raise concerns you may have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of staff or elected members or other people acting on behalf of the School. A concern may arise, for example, from worries about failure to observe standards or policies being circumvented or improper conduct. The procedure does not cover concerns that are covered by other procedures. For example, an employment problem may well be covered by the Grievance Procedure or Personal Harassment & Bullying Procedure

## **Harassment or Victimisation**

You may be put off raising a concern because you are worried about reprisals. If you raise a concern in good faith and genuinely believe it to be well founded, you should have nothing to fear. You will be doing your duty to the School, Chester West and Chester Council and the public. The School will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including covert pressure) and will do all it can to protect you. If you are involved in other procedures, such as disciplinary or redundancy, these should be kept quite separate from the investigation of your complaint.

## **Confidentiality**

Your concern will be treated in strict confidence, within this procedure, and everything done to keep your identity secret (if this is what you want). But note that you may have to be a witness at some point. It might then not be possible to keep your identity fully secret.

## **Anonymous Allegations**

This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible. This is because concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful than those raised by an identified individual. Anonymous allegations will, however, be considered at the discretion of the School.

In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the concern
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

## **Untrue Allegations**

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, as an employee you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

## **Raising A Concern**

You can raise your concern orally, (ie face to face or over the phone) or in writing. If you write, mark the envelope 'personal, private and confidential' and if the concern is of a serious nature, hand deliver the envelope to the person you wish to report the matter to.

Whichever way you choose, please give as much information as you can. Remember also to give your name, job and say if you do not want to be contacted at work (if so, give your home address and phone number).

You should include the following:

### Background information

- Information as to why you are concerned

- Details of any other procedures which you have already used, and what happened
- The names of the employee/members involved and where they work (if applicable)
- Dates or periods of time relating to the matter
- The names and jobs of any other employees / members who may support your concern

Although you will not be expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds for the concern.

You may find it easier to raise the matter jointly if there is another employee/member who has the same concern, and will support your allegation.

You would be advised to invite your trade union representative, or another person, to be present during any meetings or interview in connection with the concern raised. In this case you can remain anonymous when the concern is first raised, but you may have to be involved personally if the matter goes further.

### **Who to approach**

Rossmore School encourages you 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.

Rossmore 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 and Position	Contact Details:
Head Teacher: Mrs S Davis-McCoy	0151 338 2425 head@rossmore.cheshire.sch.uk
Deputy Head Teacher Mr t Podmore	0151 338 2425
Mr T Williams Chair of Governors	0151 339 6303

Also information available from [www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/internalfraud](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/internalfraud)

Whistleblowing hotline: telephone 01244-973223

email: [whistleblowing@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

### **How Your Concern Will Be Dealt With**

As a start, discreet enquiries will be made by a senior manager to decide whether an investigation is needed and if so, how it should be carried out. This will help protect everyone concerned. The overriding principle will be the public interest.

If this first, testing, stage shows that the concern should be followed up, there will either be a special examination or another procedure will be used, if appropriate. Examples of special procedures are in the School's Disciplinary Procedure, the Personal Harassment and Bullying Procedure or child protection procedures. It may be necessary to involve other agencies, for example the police or the Council's external auditors. Any urgent action will be taken before the investigation starts. It may be possible of course, to sort out the concern without a detailed investigation.

### **What You Will Be Told**

Within 10 working days of your concern being received, the manager who carries out the initial enquiries will write to you detailing the following:

- acknowledgement that the concern has been received;
- indicating how the School intends to deal with the matter;
- give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- detailing any initial enquiries that have been made; and
- informing you whether further investigations will take place (and if not, why not)

The amount of contact you have with the people considering the matter will depend on many things. These include the type of concern, the potential difficulties of investigating it and the availability of information. You may need to provide more help. Wherever possible, you will be told the final outcome of an investigation.

### **Personal Support**

The School will do all it can to minimise any difficulties which you may have because you have mentioned your concern. As far as we can, you will be offered personal support, which the manager leading the investigation will arrange. For example, if you had to give evidence in disciplinary or criminal proceedings, full advice about the procedure would be given to you.

### **If you are not satisfied with the School's response:**

This procedure is meant to give everyone an effective way to raise a concern within the School (and if possible, to resolve it internally). You should not feel that you have to take an issue outside the School to get satisfaction. But if you are still unhappy after using the procedure (and getting a final response), you are entitled to consider taking your concern elsewhere. If you do this, these are some contacts which are available:

- The councils external auditors – 01244 972521
- UNISON Whistleblowing Hotline – 0800 597 5022
- Charity Public Concern at Work – 0207 403 8823 (email: [whistle@pcaw.org.uk](mailto:whistle@pcaw.org.uk))
- A relevant professional voluntary organisation
- The Police

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