



FAIRFIELD PRIMARY WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

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1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

Fairfield Primary School is committed to conducting its work with honesty, integrity, openness and accountability. We expect all members of staff and other workers to maintain high standards and to raise concerns where they reasonably believe that wrongdoing may have occurred, may be occurring or may occur in the future.

The school recognises that concerns raised by staff can help identify problems at an early stage, protect pupils, staff and others, and prevent wrongdoing or harm.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- encourage workers to raise genuine concerns about wrongdoing as soon as possible;
- provide clear guidance on how and with whom concerns should be raised;
- ensure that concerns are taken seriously and investigated appropriately;

- provide protection for workers who make a qualifying disclosure in accordance with whistleblowing legislation;
- ensure that workers understand that they should not suffer detrimental treatment because they have raised a genuine concern;
- provide appropriate routes for concerns to be raised internally and, where appropriate, externally; and
- promote a culture in which speaking up about wrongdoing is encouraged and supported.

This policy has been updated to reflect the whistleblowing provisions of the Employment Rights Act 1996 and current UK Government and ACAS guidance applicable in September 2026.

2. WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?

Whistleblowing occurs when a worker reports information which they reasonably believe tends to show that wrongdoing has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur, and they reasonably believe that reporting the wrongdoing is in the public interest.

The law provides protection to workers who make qualifying disclosures through appropriate channels.

Examples of wrongdoing that may amount to whistleblowing include:

- a criminal offence, such as fraud or theft;
- a failure to comply with a legal obligation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- a danger to the health or safety of any individual;
- damage to the environment;
- sexual harassment;
- serious financial malpractice, fraud or corruption where this amounts to a relevant legal or criminal concern;
- the deliberate concealment of information tending to show any of the above; or
- another matter which falls within the statutory categories of protected disclosure.

A concern may relate to something that has happened in the past, is happening currently, or is reasonably believed is likely to happen in the future.

A worker does not need to prove that wrongdoing has actually occurred. They must have a reasonable belief that the information tends to show relevant wrongdoing and that raising the matter is in the public interest.

The public interest requirement generally means that the concern affects, or could affect, other people rather than relating solely to the worker's own personal circumstances.

3. WHAT IS NOT WHISTLEBLOWING?

Whistleblowing legislation is intended to protect disclosures about wrongdoing that are in the public interest.

A complaint relating solely to an individual's own employment circumstances will normally be dealt with under another school procedure.

Examples may include:

- a disagreement about an individual's pay;
- a personal grievance about working arrangements;
- a complaint about an individual's own performance management;
- a disagreement about holiday entitlement;
- a personal dispute with another member of staff; or
- a complaint about the way an individual has been treated where there is no wider public-interest element.

Such concerns should normally be raised under the school's Grievance Procedure, Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy or another appropriate procedure.

However, a concern may potentially fall within both a grievance procedure and whistleblowing legislation. If there is uncertainty, the school will consider the nature of the information being disclosed and whether the legal requirements for whistleblowing protection may apply.

Workers should not be discouraged from raising a concern simply because they are unsure which procedure applies.

4. WHO CAN RAISE A WHISTLEBLOWING CONCERN?

This policy is available to employees and other workers who work for or provide services to Fairfield Primary School, where they are covered by whistleblowing legislation.

This may include, where applicable:

- employees;
- agency workers;
- apprentices and trainees;
- workers engaged under relevant contracts; and
- other individuals who fall within the legal definition of a worker for whistleblowing purposes.

The school will consider concerns raised by other individuals, including volunteers, visitors, contractors or members of the public, appropriately, although the statutory employment protections for whistleblowers may not apply to everyone.

5. RAISING A WHISTLEBLOWING CONCERN

Where possible, workers are encouraged to raise concerns at an early stage.

In the first instance, a concern may normally be raised with the worker's line manager, either verbally or in writing.

However, a worker does not have to raise the concern with their line manager if:

- the matter is particularly serious;
- they believe that their line manager is involved in the wrongdoing;
- they believe that their concern will not be dealt with appropriately;
- they have previously raised the concern without satisfactory action being taken; or
- they do not feel able to raise the concern with their line manager for another legitimate reason.

In such circumstances, the concern should be raised directly with the Headteacher.

Whistleblowing Officer: Robert Birtwhistle, Fairfield Primary School, Glenfield Road, Stockton-on-Tees. Telephone: 01642 581305.

A worker may raise a concern verbally or in writing. Written concerns should, where possible, provide sufficient information to enable the school to understand:

- what the concern is;
- what wrongdoing is suspected;
- when and where the matter occurred;

- who may be involved;
- whether anyone may currently be at risk; and
- any evidence or information which may assist the school.

A worker does not need to have all the evidence before raising a concern.

6. WHERE THE CONCERN RELATES TO THE HEADTEACHER

If a concern relates to the Headteacher, the worker should not raise the matter with the Headteacher.

Instead, the concern should be raised directly with the Chair of Governors:

Beverley Jones – Chair of Governors, Fairfield Primary School, Glenfield Road, Stockton-on-Tees.

Correspondence should be marked: PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL – WHISTLEBLOWING CONCERN

The Chair of Governors will determine the appropriate arrangements for dealing with the concern, including whether an independent person should investigate it.

Where the concern relates to a governor, the matter should be raised with the Chair of Governors. Where the concern relates to the Chair of Governors, the matter should be referred to the Local Authority Monitoring Officer.

7. SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE) makes clear that all staff have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in safeguarding arrangements. Fairfield Primary School is committed to creating a culture in which such concerns are taken seriously and addressed promptly

Concerns relating to the safety or welfare of pupils must be reported immediately in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and safeguarding procedures.

A safeguarding concern should not be delayed while a worker considers whether it also amounts to whistleblowing.

Where a concern involves a failure to comply with safeguarding duties, illegal conduct, serious wrongdoing or a risk to the health or safety of pupils or others, it may also constitute a whistleblowing concern.

Where a safeguarding concern relates to the Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead, the school's safeguarding procedures should be followed for escalation.

Where a safeguarding concern involves poor practice, a breach of safeguarding duties, a failure to follow statutory guidance, illegal conduct, or a risk of harm to pupils, staff or others, it may also constitute a whistleblowing matter. Such concerns will be considered in line with this policy and the current version of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).

8. MEETINGS AND SUPPORT

The school will arrange a meeting with the worker as soon as reasonably practicable to discuss the concern.

A worker may bring a workplace colleague or trade union representative to a meeting under this policy.

The companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

Where appropriate, the school will provide the worker with a written summary of the concern raised and an indication of how the school intends to deal with the matter.

Workers are not expected to investigate the concern themselves or put themselves at risk in order to obtain evidence.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

The school recognises that workers may be concerned about raising a whistleblowing matter.

The school will make every reasonable effort to protect the confidentiality of a worker who raises a concern.

Where a worker asks for their identity to remain confidential, this request will be respected wherever possible.

However, there may be circumstances where it is necessary to disclose the worker's identity in order to investigate the concern properly, comply with legal obligations or ensure a fair process.

Where practicable, the school will discuss this with the worker before their identity is disclosed.

Workers should also respect the confidentiality of any investigation and should not discuss the matter with colleagues or other individuals unless this is necessary or appropriate.

Anonymous concerns will be considered. However, anonymous disclosures may be more difficult to investigate, particularly where the school cannot obtain further information or clarification from the person raising the concern.

10. EXTERNAL DISCLOSURES

The school encourages workers, where appropriate, to raise concerns internally so that the school has an opportunity to investigate and address the matter.

However, this policy does not prevent a worker from making a protected disclosure to an appropriate external organisation or prescribed person where the legal requirements for doing so are met.

Workers should understand that different legal conditions apply to disclosures made to different people or organisations.

A worker may seek independent advice before making an external disclosure.

Relevant external organisations will depend on the nature of the concern and may include an appropriate regulator, public authority, the police or another prescribed person or body.

A current list of prescribed persons and bodies is published by the UK Government.

Workers should not normally make disclosures to the media without first obtaining appropriate independent advice, as the legal protections for external disclosures depend on the circumstances and applicable legal requirements.

External Bodies

- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Monitoring Officer, Legal Services, Dunedin House, Columbia Drive, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees TS17 6BJ.
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where concerns relate to allegations against adults working with children. Contact via Stockton-on-Tees Family Help Point on 01642 527764.
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Counter Fraud arrangements where concerns relate to suspected fraud, corruption or financial malpractice. Concerns can be submitted through the Council's fraud reporting service.

*Where a whistleblowing concern relates to the Chair of Governors, the concern should be reported directly to the Monitoring Officer of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

11. INVESTIGATION AND OUTCOME

Once a concern has been raised, the school will carry out an initial assessment to determine:

- whether the matter falls within the scope of this policy;
- whether another school procedure is more appropriate;
- whether immediate action is required to protect pupils, staff or others;
- whether external authorities or regulators need to be informed; and
- what investigation, if any, is appropriate.

The school will inform the worker, where appropriate, that their concern has been received and will provide an indication of how it proposes to deal with the matter.

An investigator or investigation team may be appointed where appropriate.

The investigator may be an employee with relevant experience or, where necessary, an appropriately independent person or specialist.

The investigator may review relevant documentation, speak to individuals involved, request further information from the worker, consider relevant policies and procedures, and make recommendations to prevent similar concerns arising in the future.

The school will aim to keep the worker informed about the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale.

However, there may be circumstances where confidentiality, data protection requirements, safeguarding considerations or legal obligations prevent the school from providing specific details about the investigation or any disciplinary action taken.

The school will nevertheless seek to provide appropriate feedback to the worker about the outcome of the concern, so far as it is lawful and reasonable to do so.

12. PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS

The school is committed to ensuring that workers who raise genuine concerns are treated fairly and appropriately.

A worker who makes a qualifying disclosure in accordance with whistleblowing legislation must not suffer detrimental treatment because they have raised the concern.

Detrimental treatment may include:

- bullying or harassment;
- threats;
- intimidation;
- unfair treatment;
- unfavourable changes to working arrangements;
- disciplinary action taken because the worker raised the concern; or
- other adverse treatment connected to the disclosure.

Employees are also protected by law from unfair dismissal because they have made a protected disclosure.

Any worker who believes they have suffered detrimental treatment as a result of raising a whistleblowing concern should report this immediately to the Whistleblowing Officer or, where the concern relates to the Headteacher, to the Chair of Governors.

The school will take allegations of retaliation or victimisation seriously and may take disciplinary action against anyone found to have threatened, bullied, harassed or retaliated against a whistleblower.

13. FALSE OR MALICIOUS ALLEGATIONS

The school recognises that a concern raised honestly may subsequently be found to be mistaken, unsubstantiated or unsupported by sufficient evidence.

A worker will not be subject to disciplinary action simply because a concern they have raised is not substantiated.

However, if an investigation establishes that a worker has deliberately made a false allegation maliciously or dishonestly, or has deliberately provided misleading information, this may be dealt with under the school's Disciplinary Procedure.

This provision must not be used to discourage workers from raising concerns where they reasonably believe that wrongdoing may have occurred.

14. INDEPENDENT ADVICE

If you are unsure whether your concern amounts to whistleblowing, or you would like independent and confidential advice before raising a concern, you can contact Protect, the UK's independent whistleblowing charity.

Protect provides free and confidential advice to workers about raising concerns about wrongdoing in the workplace, including advice about how and where to raise a concern and the legal protections available to whistleblowers.

Protect Advice Line: 0203 117 2520

Website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>

15. IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE WAY YOUR CONCERN HAS BEEN HANDLED

The school will seek to deal with whistleblowing concerns fairly, promptly and appropriately.

If a worker is concerned about the way their disclosure has been handled, they should raise the matter with the Headteacher, where the original concern was dealt with by another member of staff, or the Chair of Governors, where the concern involved the Headteacher or where it is otherwise appropriate to escalate the matter.

The worker may also seek independent advice about whether an external disclosure to a prescribed person or body may be appropriate.

Nothing in this policy prevents a worker from exercising their statutory rights.

16. RECORD KEEPING AND DATA PROTECTION

The school will maintain appropriate records of whistleblowing concerns and investigations.

Information will be handled confidentially and in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and the school's data protection policies and procedures.

Information will only be shared with those who have a legitimate need to receive it, subject to safeguarding, legal and other statutory requirements.

Records will be retained in accordance with the school's applicable records retention arrangements.

17. GOVERNANCE AND REVIEW

The Headteacher is responsible for the implementation and day-to-day operation of this policy.

The Governing Body has oversight of the school's whistleblowing arrangements.

The policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are significant changes to legislation, government guidance or the school's procedures.

Next review: September 2027

CONTACTS

Whistleblowing Officer / Headteacher

Robert Birtwhistle
Fairfield Primary School
Glenfield Road
Stockton-on-Tees
Telephone: 01642 581305

Chair of Governors – concerns relating to the Headteacher

Beverley Jones – Chair of Governors
Fairfield Primary School
Glenfield Road
Stockton-on-Tees

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