



Whistleblowing Policy

Date Policy was formally adopted	September 2024
Review Date	September 2025
Written by	Colin Raraty
Chair's Name	Steph Green

Rights Respecting School - Safeguarding Policy Statement

As a Rights Respecting School, at Rodings we are committed to upholding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and use these articles to inform the policies and decisions we make. Some of the UNCRC articles which inform this policy are:

Article 2: Non-Discrimination – The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.

Article 3: Best interests of the child - The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

Article 6: Life, survival and development - Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

Article 12: Respect the Views of the Child – Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.

Article 15: Freedom of Association – Every child has the right to meet with other children and young people and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop others from enjoying their rights.

Article 18: Parental Responsibilities and State Assistance - Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support parents by creating support services for children and giving parents the help they need to raise their children.

Article 19: Protection from violence, abuse and neglect - Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

Article 20: Children Unable to Live with their Family - If a child cannot be looked after by their immediate family, the government must give them special protection and assistance. This includes making sure the child is provided with alternative care that is continuous and respects the child's culture, language and religion.

Article 29: Goals of Education - Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures and the environment.

Article 32: Child Labour - Governments must protect children from economic exploitation and work that is dangerous or might harm their health, development or education. Governments must set a minimum age for children to work and ensure that work conditions are safe and appropriate.

Article 33: Drug Abuse - Governments must protect children from the illegal use of drugs and from being involved in the production or distribution of drugs.

Article 34: Sexual Exploitation - Governments must protect children from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.

Article 35: Abduction, Sale and Trafficking - Governments must protect children from being abducted, sold or moved illegally to a different place in or outside their country for the purpose of exploitation.

Article 39: Recovery from Trauma and Reintegration - Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.

1. Introduction

It is important to the Governing Board that any suspected fraud, misconduct, malpractice or wrongdoing by workers or employees of Rodings Primary School is reported and properly dealt with. The Governing Board is committed to creating an open and supportive environment where individuals feel able to “speak up” about any genuine concerns regarding the alleged wrongful conduct of the employer, or about the conduct of a fellow employee, or any third party.

This policy sets out the framework for how issues can be raised confidentially internally, and/or if necessary, outside the management structure of the school to a prescribed body (see 2.1 below). All disclosures will be handled consistently and fairly and appropriate action will be taken by the school to resolve the issue in line with this policy.

This policy applies to all employees and Governors of the school. Volunteers and other individuals engaged to work at or provide services to the school, including agency workers and contractors, are encouraged to use it where appropriate.

1.1. The law provides protection for employees or workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters. These are called "qualifying disclosures". A qualifying disclosure is one made in the public interest by an employee or worker who has a reasonable belief that there has been or is likely to be:

- a breach of any legal obligation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- a criminal offence;
- a danger to the Health and Safety of any individual;
- damage to the environment; or
- deliberate concealment of information about any of the above

Some examples of qualifying disclosures in a school context may include:

- Fraudulent acts (e.g. manipulation of accounting records/finances, inappropriate use of funds, decision making for personal gain, abuse of position to influence decisions);
- Breaches of acceptable professional and ethical standards;
- Breaches of the school's Health and Safety policy entailing danger to staff or pupils; and/or
- Breaches of any of the school's policies or the Code of Conduct.

It is not necessary for the employee or worker to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed - a reasonable belief is sufficient.

For the purposes of this policy the term “whistle-blower” refers to the individual making the disclosure.

1.2. The whistle-blower must reasonably believe they are making the disclosure in the public interest (i.e. it affects others such as pupils in the school or members of the public). This means that personal grievances and complaints (e.g. a concern

about their own contractual terms) are not usually covered by this policy and should be dealt with:

- by employees through the Grievance Procedure
- by other parties through the Complaints Procedure

2. Raising concerns/making a disclosure

2.1. Initial concern

The Governing Board encourages the “whistle-blower” to raise the matter internally in the first instance. Concerns should normally be raised initially with the whistle-blower’s headteacher or the Chair of Governors.

If the whistle-blower considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise it internally they may refer the matter to an external prescribed body. A prescribed body is an organisation, normally with some regulatory function (for example the Health and Safety Executive), which is prescribed by the Secretary of State for the purposes of the Act who an individual may make a protected disclosure to. Any such disclosure to a prescribed body will qualify for protection under the Act. A list of prescribed bodies is available at the following link:

[Blowing the whistle to a prescribed person - GOV.UK](#)

In the event that the whistle-blower feels a disclosure should be referred to an external prescribed body some of the relevant bodies are also set out below:

Nature of disclosure:	External reporting/Prescribed body:
Fraud or financial malpractice (see 3.2 below)	(Maintained schools only) Counter Fraud Manager CounterFraud.Team@essex.gov.uk
Child Protection/ Safeguarding issues	Local Authority Designated Officer Essex Duty Line: 03330 139 797 NSPCC Whistleblowing helpline: 0800 028 0285 Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
Data protection issues	Information Commissioner https://ico.org.uk

Health and Safety issues	Health and Safety Executive HSE
--------------------------	--

If a concern is raised verbally it should be followed up in writing wherever possible.

The whistle-blower has no responsibility for investigating the matter - it is the school's responsibility to ensure that an appropriate investigation takes place.

Where the complaint is serious, for example involving fraud, theft or other potential gross misconduct by an employee, the whistle-blower should act quickly to report it but should not mention it to the subject of the complaint or other colleagues as this could affect the investigatory process.

The timescales for handling disclosures will differ depending on the nature of the disclosure made but all disclosures (whether formal or informal) will be acknowledged within 2 working days.

2.2 Investigation

The Headteacher or the Chair of Governors will arrange an investigation into the matter either by investigating the matter him/herself or immediately passing the issue to an appropriate person (except where they are the subject of the disclosure where an alternative suitable person will be appointed). The investigation may involve the whistle-blower and other individuals involved giving a written statement. Any investigation will be carried out promptly and confidentially.

If a whistle-blower wishes to remain anonymous this should be raised with the person to whom the initial disclosure is made. In some cases this may be possible but in more serious cases where disciplinary action may have to be taken against others this may be more difficult. The school is committed to protecting the well-being of the whistle-blower whilst this policy is followed.

The whistle-blower's statement (where available) will be taken into account, and he/she will be asked to comment on any additional evidence obtained. The person responsible for the investigation may ask the whistle-blower to attend a meeting to gather all the information needed to ensure a clear understanding of the situation.

Where a meeting is held, the whistle-blower may be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague if they wish and where possible the dates/times will be agreed to facilitate this.

2.3 Outcome of the investigation

The person who carried out the investigation will take any necessary action, which may include reporting the matter to the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or an appropriate prescribed body (if this has not already taken place).

At the conclusion of any investigation, the whistle-blower will be told the outcome of the investigation (in as much detail as is deemed appropriate in the circumstances) and what action is to be taken or is proposed. If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained.

Where a concern is raised anonymously the school will not ordinarily be able to provide feedback to the whistle-blower and any action taken as a result of an anonymous disclosure may be limited. The school will take all appropriate steps to investigate such a disclosure in line with the level of information provided. If an anonymous whistle-blower wishes to seek feedback from the school an appropriate anonymised email address should be provided.

2.4 Further action

Where having raised an initial concern and the whistle-blower has a genuine belief that the school has failed to take appropriate action or investigate the issue properly and they wish to pursue the matter further, they may report their concern to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors or in exceptional circumstances, if the concerns relate to a maintained school to the Local Authority or to an appropriate prescribed body (if this has not already been reported).

The Headteacher or Chair of Governors may arrange for further investigation to be carried out, make any necessary further enquiries and/or make their own report. On the conclusion of any further investigation, they will take appropriate action which may include reporting the matter to a prescribed body if this has not taken place at an earlier stage in the process.

3. Other issues

3.1 Concerns raised by member of the public

Where complaints are received from members of the public, the school's formal complaints procedure will be followed, unless the complaint relates to the specific conduct or performance of an individual employee/worker in which case the Disciplinary Procedure may need to be instigated.

3.2 Criminal issues/fraud

In the event of the allegation being of a very serious nature, for example relating to a fraud or other potential gross misconduct offence, there may be a need to

involve the school's auditors and/or the police or other appropriate authorities. This should normally be agreed initially by the Headteacher/Chair of Governors who should, in turn, and where appropriate, keep the Local Authority informed in view of any possible implications concerning public monies.

Maintained schools:

The school must notify the Counter Fraud Manager within Essex County Council (see 2.1 above) of any instances of fraud, theft or financial irregularity. Any unusual or systematic fraud, regardless of value, must also be reported.

4. Protecting 'whistle-blowers'

4.1 Any whistle-blowers who make protected disclosures in line with this procedure have the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment, or victimised, because they have made a disclosure. This means continued employment and opportunities for promotion or training will not be affected because the whistle-blower has raised a legitimate concern.

4.2 Whistle-blowers should report any harassment or victimisation to an appropriate manager as soon as practicable. The school will take all reasonable steps to prevent/address such harassment or victimisation. Victimisation of a whistle-blower for making a protected disclosure will be considered a disciplinary matter and will be dealt with under the school's Disciplinary Procedure.

4.3 Whistle-blowers may find the process of reporting an issue/wrongdoing difficult and uncomfortable. The school will take all reasonable steps to support the whistle-blower which may include access to an external counselling service. The whistle-blower may also be referred to the charity Protect (previously known as Public Concern at Work) <https://protect-advice.org.uk> for information and advice.

5. Malicious allegations/disclosures

5.1 If, following appropriate investigation, it is considered that an employee has made a malicious allegation without real substance and/or which could not be reasonably considered to be in the public interest; this will be taken as a serious matter and may potentially lead to disciplinary action in line with the school's Disciplinary Procedure.

5.2 Where other individuals engaged by the school make a malicious allegation, the school will investigate the allegation thoroughly and take appropriate action, which may include terminating the contract/arrangements with the individual.

5.3 If disciplinary action is required, the person who carried out the investigation will report the matter to a relevant manager to start the disciplinary procedure.

5.4 If a third party has made a malicious allegation the Governing Board may take legal advice about steps open to it where appropriate.

6. Data Protection

6.1 When an individual makes a disclosure, the school will process any personal data collected in accordance with its data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which the individual makes the disclosure is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of dealing with the disclosure.

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Term/Abbreviation	Meaning
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
ICO	Information Commissioner's Office
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children