

**Stormont House School
Whistle Blowing Policy
Updated 31 May 2016**

Introduction

The staff and governors of Stormont House School seek to run all aspects of school business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity. In the event that members of school staff, parents, governors or the school community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern, Stormont House School has established the following whistle blowing policy, or code of practice, which acts as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially, and provides for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

Throughout this policy, the term whistle blower denotes the person raising the concern or making the complaint. It is not meant in a pejorative sense and is entirely consistent with the terminology used by Lord Nolan, as recommended in the Second Report of the *Committee on Standards in Public Life: Local Spending Bodies*, published in May 1996.

Stormont House School is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. Stormont House School recognises that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and has therefore developed a system that allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the school environment but also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the school.

Stormont House School is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness so that a person who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise the matter with full confidence that the matter will be appropriately considered and resolved.

The provisions of this policy apply to matters of suspected fraud and impropriety and not to matters of more general grievance, which would be dealt with under the Stormont House School grievance procedures.

When might the whistle blowing policy apply?

The type of activity or behaviour which Stormont House School considers should be dealt with under this policy includes:

- manipulation of accounting records and finances
- inappropriate use of school assets or funds
- decision-making for personal gain
- any criminal activity
- abuse of position
- fraud and deceit
- serious breaches of school procedures which may advantage a particular party (for example, tampering with tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest)

What action should the whistle blower take?

Stormont House School encourages the whistle blower 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.

Stormont House School has designated a number of individuals to specifically deal with such matters and the whistle blower is invited to decide which of those individuals would be the most appropriate person to deal with the matter.

Name & Position

Kevin McDonnell
E5 8NP
Headteacher

Contact details

Stormont House School, Downs Park Road,

020 8985 4245
kmcdonnell@stormonthouse.hackney.sch.uk

Bernard Hawes
Chair of Governors

hawes.be@hotmail.co.uk

The whistle blower may prefer to raise the matter in person, by telephone or in written form marked 'private and confidential' and addressed to one of the above-named individuals. All matters will be treated in strict confidence, and anonymity will be respected wherever possible.

Alternatively, if the whistle blower considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the school, the matter should be directed in the first instance to the following members of Hackney Learning Trust:

Financial: Head of Finance, Hackney Learning Trust, 1 Reading Lane, Hackney, London E8 1GQ

Other: Head of Human Resources, Hackney Learning Trust, 1 Reading Lane, Hackney, London E8 1GQ

Stormont House School would prefer that a serious concern is raised responsibly rather than not at all. Despite the assurances, the whistleblower may feel that it is more appropriate to raise the concern with an external organisation, such as a regulator. It is, of course, open for them to do so, provided they have sufficient evidence to support the concern. Stormont House School strongly advises that before reporting the concern externally, the whistleblower seeks advice from one of the following:

Public Concern at Work, a registered charity which advises on serious malpractice within the work place, can be contacted on 020 7404 6609.

The Audit Commission, "prescribed persons" under the Public Interest Disclosure Act, have set up an Anti-fraud and Corruption Unit which can be contacted on: 020 7630 1019.

How will the matter be progressed?

The individual(s) in receipt of the information or allegation (the investigating officer(s)) will carry out a preliminary investigation. This will seek to establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation and can be resolved internally. The initial assessment may identify the need to involve third parties to provide further information, advice or assistance: for example, involvement of other members of school staff, legal or personnel advisors, the police and Hackney Learning Trust.

Records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation. The investigating officer(s), possibly in conjunction with the Governing Body, will consider how best to report the findings and what corrective action needs to be taken. This may include some form of disciplinary action or third party referral, such as the police.

The whistleblower will be informed of the results of the investigation and the action taken to address the matter. Depending on the nature of the concern or allegation and whether or not it has been substantiated, the matter will be reported to the Governing Body and the LEA.

Hackney Learning Trust has its own procedures for dealing with such matters and will ensure every effort to respect the confidentiality of the whistleblower. If the whistleblower is not satisfied with the outcome of an investigation, Stormont House School would prefer that the whistleblower raised this with them or Hackney Learning Trust, explaining why this is the case. The concern will be looked at again if there is good reason to do so.

If the whistleblower is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter or has genuine concerns that the matter has not been handled appropriately, the concerns should be raised with the investigating officer(s), the Governing Body and/or directed to Hackney Learning Trust.

Respecting confidentiality

Wherever possible, Stormont House School seeks to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the whistleblower and will as far as possible protect him/her from reprisals. Stormont House School will not tolerate any attempt to victimise the whistleblower or attempts to prevent concerns being raised, and will consider any necessary disciplinary or corrective action appropriate to the circumstances. The Public Interest Disclosure Act became law in 1999 and gives a "worker" the right not to be victimised or dismissed because he or she has made a protected disclosure.

Raising unfounded malicious concerns

Individuals are encouraged to come forward in good faith with genuine concerns, with the knowledge they will be taken seriously. If individuals raise malicious, unfounded concerns, or attempt to make mischief, this will also be taken seriously and may constitute a disciplinary offence or require some other form of penalty appropriate to the circumstances.

Conclusion

Existing good practice within Stormont House School in terms of its systems of internal control, both financial and non-financial, and the external regulatory environment in which the school operates, ensure that cases of suspected fraud or impropriety rarely occur. This whistle blowing policy is provided as a reference document to establish a framework within which issues can be raised confidentially internally and, if necessary, outside the management structure of the school. This document is a public commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned.

Additional Sources of Advice and Information

For additional information and advice on developing a policy on whistle blowing, schools may wish to contact the charity *Public Concern at Work*. This charity offers free legal advice, in certain circumstances, to people concerned about serious malpractice at work. Their literature states that matters are handled in strict confidence and without obligation. Contact details for the charity are as follows:

Public Concern at Work
Suite 306
16 Baldwins Gardens
London EC1 N 7RJ
Tel: 020 7404 6609

Updated September 2017: Edit references to The Learning Trust to Hackney Learning Trust