



East Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (SILC)

Whistleblowing Policy

Next Review Date:	March 2026
Governing Board Committee Purview:	Resources
Frequency of Review:	Annually

VISION:

At the East SILC we believe in Exceptional Education for Exceptional Lives

VALUES:

The four pillars of the East SILC are:

- Kindness
- Integrity
- Ambition
- Collective responsibility

POLICY SUMMARY AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

INTRODUCTION

As an employee of a school, you may be the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the organisation. However, you may not express your concerns because you feel that speaking up would be disloyal to colleagues or the organisation. You may also fear harassment or victimisation, and think it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report it. This policy sets out the principles that enable you to raise concerns about a danger, risk, malpractice or wrongdoing that affects others, without the fear of adverse consequences.

The Governors of the school are committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment, we encourage employees, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work, to come forward and voice those concerns. Making a disclosure under this policy will enable the school to address any risks as early as possible.

It is recognised that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis. This policy document makes it clear that staff can do so without fear of reprisals. This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable staff of the school, to raise serious concerns within the school rather than overlooking a problem or discussing it externally.

In addition, the policy provides a means for you to raise a concern under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which provides you with a certain level of legal protection if you wish to raise legitimate concerns.

AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

AIMS

- Provide avenues for you to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- Allows you to take the matter further if you are dissatisfied with the school's response and reassure you that you will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith.

There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment with the school. This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures, although the school reserves the right to determine which procedure is appropriate.

Concerns to be reported under this policy may relate to where:

- A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed;
- A person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which that person is subject;
- Something is against the School's Contract Procedure Rules, Financial Procedure Rules or other policies;
- Something falls below established standards or practice;
- Something amounts to improper conduct, including serious misuse or abuse of authority;
- A miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur;
- The health and safety of any individual had been, is being or is likely to be endangered;
- The environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged;
- Gross waste or mismanagement of funds has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur; or
- The information tending to show any of the above is being or is likely to be concealed.

HARASSMENT OR VICTIMISATION

The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice. The school will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith. This does not necessarily mean that if you are already the subject of procedures such as disciplinary, improving performance, grievance or managing attendance, that those procedures will be halted as a result of your whistleblowing.

Where feasible, you will be contacted when your concern has been investigated to ascertain whether you have suffered any detriment as a result of your whistleblowing. If at any time, either during or after the investigation, you feel that you have suffered any detriment as a result of your whistleblowing you should contact your union, the Principal or the Chair of the Governing Body.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The school treats the details of all whistleblowers in confidence and will do its best not divulge your identity. However, it must be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information without us revealing your identity directly, and a statement by you may be required as part of the evidence.

ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

Allegations can be made anonymously. However, this policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation, as concerns expressed anonymously are often much more difficult to investigate. For example, we may need to contact you to obtain further information or verify the details you have already given us.

Anonymous allegations will be considered wherever possible at the discretion of the school. The factors to be taken into account when determining whether an investigation in such a case can proceed would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other, 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, you make malicious or vexatious allegations, appropriate action may be taken against you.

MAIN LEGISLATIVE AND NATIONAL GUIDANCE AND OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
Data Protection Act (1998)
Freedom of Information Act (2000)
Employment legislation
Employment policies

PROCEDURES

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

The earlier you express the concern, the easier it is to take action.

As a first step, you should raise concerns with:

- Your Head of School or the Head of Medical Needs Teaching Service depending on the location of the incident(s),
or the Executive Principal
or other appropriate manager.
- This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice. For example, if you believe

that management is involved, you should contact the Principal, the Governing Body or Human Resources.

The Human Resources Schools Team at Leeds City Council can give advice and guidance on how matters of concern can be pursued.

You may invite your trade union or professional association to raise a matter on your behalf.

All referrals made will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

Although you are not expected to prove an allegation, you will need to demonstrate that there are sufficient grounds for your concern.

If you are concerned about reporting an issue within school or Leeds City Council you may wish to seek advice from Leeds City Council's Internal Audit Division of the Resources Directorate. They can be contacted on 0113 378 8008, this number relates to the dedicated whistleblowing hotline which will be answered by a member of the Internal Audit team or an answer phone, alternatively email concerns@leeds.gov.uk.

There are special rules surrounding the gathering of evidence. Any attempt to gather evidence by people who are unfamiliar with these rules may adversely affect the outcome of the case as evidence has to be collected in accordance with current legislation. This is of particular importance in regard to surveillance. If you are at all unsure about the gathering of evidence, advice is available from the HR Schools Team, Health and Safety Team, Finance Team and/or the Child Protection Team at Leeds City Council.

Concerns are best raised in writing. The sort of information required to investigate an allegation are details of the background and history to the case, names, dates, places and, where possible, the reason why you are particularly concerned.

HOW THE SCHOOL WILL RESPOND

The action taken by the school will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:

- be investigated internally, (this is the most likely option)
- be referred to Human Resources who may decide it is more appropriate for them to identify an Investigating Officer
- be referred to the Police
- or any combination of the above.

In order to protect individuals and the school, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

Within ten working days of a concern being received, where appropriate, the school will write to you:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how it proposes to deal with the matter (including potential timescales)
- telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made; and
- telling you whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not.

The amount of contact between the person(s) considering the issues and those under enquiry will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from you.

When any meeting is arranged, you have the right, if you wish, to be accompanied by a Union or professional association representative or a colleague who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

The school will take steps to minimise any difficulties that you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the school will advise you about the procedure.

The school acknowledges the need to provide you with assurance that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, you will receive appropriate information about the extent and outcomes of any investigations.

HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue to raise concerns within the organisation. The school hopes you will be satisfied. If you are not, and if you feel it is right to take the matter further, the following are possible contact points.

- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- Your union
- The Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- The Information Commissioner

- Leeds City Council
- Your solicitor
- The Police
- Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) Tel: 020 3117 2520 Website: www.protect-advice.org.uk Email: info@protect-advice.org.uk (independent charity that provides free advice for employees who wish to express concerns about fraud or other serious malpractice)
- The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (formerly BERR) www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-enterprise-and-regulatory-reform

If you do take the matter outside the school, you will need to ensure that you do not disclose confidential information or that disclosure would be privileged. If you have any queries as to what constitutes confidential information, please check with the LCC HR Schools Team about this.

SUPPORT FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS

Everything possible will be done to manage employment relationships following a genuine and reasonable concern being raised.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY / LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

The school Governing Body has overall responsibility for:

- maintaining and operating the policy
- annual review of the policy
- annual report on the effectiveness of the policy
- approving amendments to the policy
- promoting the policy periodically
- maintaining a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form that does not endanger your confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Leeds City Council HR Schools Team.

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

To provide advice and support for whistleblowing matters.

MANAGERS / LEADERS

To undertake investigations without undue delay.

To maintain confidentiality.

EMPLOYEES

To raise issues of concern responsibly.

OTHERS

As an employee of a contractor of the school or a partner organisation, it is recognised that in some cases, you may have concerns which you may want to bring to our attention. The school is committed to encouraging all individuals, including non-school employees to raise serious concerns with the organisation. Whilst we would seek always to protect the anonymity of individuals raising concerns in good faith, the Whistleblowing Policy does not protect employees of external organisations in the same way as school employees.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The equality impact assessment of this policy is wholly positive as the policy supports the opportunity to address equality and diversity issues.

FURTHER GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION

Further guidance and information to support the implementation of this policy is available in a separate document published by the LCC HR Schools Team.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Cultural diversity, religion, ethnicity, gender, ability, disability and age of pupils and staff will be respected.

IMPLEMENTATION

Pupils, staff, parents, carers and governors will be aware of the school's position on confidentiality.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The school will review this policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school. The school will monitor the impact of this policy and action plan on pupils, parents and staff from different ethnic groups. In particular, we will monitor the impact of our policies on the attainment levels of our pupils.

To monitor our pupil's attainment, we will collect information about pupil's performance and progress, by ethnic group, analyse it and use it to examine trends. To help interpret this information we will monitor other areas that could have an adverse impact on pupil's attainment such as:

- Exclusion
- Racism, racial harassment and bullying
- Curriculum, teaching and learning (including language and cultural needs).
- Punishment and reward.
- Membership of the governing body.
- Parental involvement
- Working with the community
- Support, advice and guidance

Monitoring information will help us to see what progress we are making towards meeting our race equality targets and aims. In particular, it will help us to:

- Highlight any differences between pupils from different ethnic groups.
- Ask why these differences exist and test the explanations given.
- Review the effectiveness of current targets and objectives.
- Decide what further action will be necessary to meet particular needs and to improve the performance of pupils from different ethnic groups (which might include positive action).
- Rethink and set targets in relevant strategic plans.
- Links will be made with Performance Management objectives which will include qualitative information as well as quantitative data.
- Take action to make improvements.

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF POLICIES

- As a school we will assess the impact of this and other policies on pupils, staff and parents from different ethnic groups.
- We will assess whether the policies have or could have an adverse impact on the attainment of pupils from different racial groups.
- We will assess the effectiveness of our policies through existing arrangements for developing and reviewing other school policies.