

CCE Whistleblowing Policy

March 2022

Whistleblowing policy

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1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to make clear that employees can, and should, voice concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination, or disadvantage. It is intended that this policy will encourage and enable employees to raise concerns within each school and Celtic Cross Education rather than overlooking a problem or 'whistleblowing' outside the organisation.

1.2 This policy took effect from 6th October 2020, as approved by the board of directors of Celtic Cross Education (hereafter referred to as the Trust), and is reviewed annually.

2. Applicability

2.1 This policy applies to all employees within the Trust whether on a permanent or on a fixed-term contract. It also applies to contractors working for the school or Trust on school premises, for example: agency workers, supply teachers, and builders.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Trust along with the School Monitoring Council and management of the school has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Whistleblowing Policy is managed appropriately, in accordance with this agreed procedure.

3.2 The Head of School, along with line managers, are responsible for making employees aware of the existence of this policy. The Head of School is responsible for maintaining a record of concerns raised and outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger confidentiality) and will report to the School Monitoring Council and the Trust Board of Directors, as necessary.

3.3 Employees are responsible for making themselves familiar with and complying with this policy.

4. Policy

4.1 Employees could be the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within an individual school or the Trust. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the school/Trust. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, the employee may feel it is easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

4.2 The Trust is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity, and accountability. In line with that commitment, we expect employees, and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Trust's work, to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

4.3 This policy aims to encourage employees to feel confident about raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice, and to provide avenues for employees to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken. The policy also aims to reassure employees that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have a reasonable belief and have made any disclosure in good faith.

4.4 A grievance procedure exists to enable an employee to lodge a grievance relating to his/her own employment. The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. This includes:

- Conduct which is an offence or breach of the law
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- Serious health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- Serious damage to the environment
- The unauthorised use of public funds
- Sexual or physical abuse of pupils
- Unethical conduct

4.5 Any serious concerns that an employee may have about any aspect of conduct by employees of the school/Trust, or others acting on behalf of the school, may be reported under this policy. This policy does not replace the Trust's complaints procedure.

5. Safeguards against harassment or victimisation

5.1 The Trust recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what the employee is saying is true, or they have a reason to believe that it is true, the employee will have nothing to fear because they will be doing their duty to the school/Trust and pupils of the school/Trust.

5.2 The Trust will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressure) and will take appropriate action to protect employees when concerns are raised in good faith.

5.3 Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence, or be influenced by, any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect an employee.

6. Confidentiality

6.1 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of an employee who raises allegations under this policy. At the appropriate time, however, the employee may need to come forward as a witness.

6.2 Employees are encouraged to put their name to allegations wherever possible. This is because concerns expressed anonymously are much more difficult to investigate. Therefore, anonymous allegations will be considered at the discretion of the Head of School/CEO in consultation with the Chair of the School Monitoring Council/Board.

7. Untrue allegations

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

8. How to raise a concern

8.1 In most circumstances, the employee should raise concerns with their immediate line manager. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of malpractice. For example, if the employee believes that senior management is involved, the employee should approach the Head of School, Chair of the School Monitoring Council, or Trust Board of Directors.

8.2 Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. It is helpful for the following information to be provided: the background and history of the concern (giving relevant names and dates) and the reason why the employee is particularly concerned about the situation.

8.3 The earlier the employee expresses the concerns, the easier it will be to take action.

8.4 Although the employee is not expected to prove beyond reasonable doubt the truth of an allegation, the employee should demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for the concern.

8.5 The employee may wish to consider discussing the concern with a colleague or trade union representative first and may find it easier to raise the matter if there are other colleagues who have the same experiences or concerns.

9. How the School/Trust will respond

9.1 The school/Trust may need to test out the concerns. Where appropriate, the concerns may be investigated by management; this could be through the disciplinary process where relevant; or form the subject of an independent inquiry.

9.2 In order to protect individuals and those accused of malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate, and if so, what form should it take. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

9.3 Within 10 working days of a concern being raised, the Head of School Monitoring Council/Board of Directors, will write to the employee:

- Acknowledging that a concern has been raised
- Indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter
- Giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response

- Telling the employee whether any initial enquiries have been made
- Telling the employee whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

The amount of contact between the individual considering the issue and the employee who raised the issue will depend on the nature of the matter raised; the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of information provided. If necessary, the school/Trust will seek further information from the employee.

The school/Trust accepts that the employee will need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed and, therefore, the school/Trust will inform the employee of the steps taken to resolve the matter, as appropriate. Where the employee has raised concerns in writing, then the school/Trust should confirm their course of action in writing also.

10. How the matter can be taken further

10.1 The aim of this is that employees should be able to raise concerns internally and it is hoped that the employee will be satisfied with any action taken. If this is not the case, then they may raise their concerns with the Trust's Board of Directors.

The Trust's designated whistleblowing Directors are outlined below:

Clare Kendle clare.kendle@celticcross.education

Sarah Parekh sarah.parekh@celticcross.education

If the employee wishes to take the matter outside of the organisation then the following are possible contact points:

- Public Concern at Work
- Audit Commission
- A relevant Trade Union
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Relevant Professional Bodies
- Regulatory Organisations
- Local Police

10.2 If the employee chooses to take the matter outside of the school and the Trust, then the employee should ensure that they do not disclose confidential information. An employee should not take concerns directly to the media.