

SOUTH FARNBOROUGH INFANT SCHOOL

Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure



Date of policy: November 2024

Review of policy: November 2025

Person responsible: Danielle Duffy

Presented to staff and governors: November 2024

Policy/Procedure Statement

South Farnborough Infant School has a commitment to the highest standards of quality, honesty, openness and accountability. Staff have an important role in helping to achieve these standards by voicing concerns when someone in the organisation appears to be doing something illegal or improper.

This policy exists exclusively for circumstances of concern about a risk, malpractice or wrongdoing that may affect others or the school as an organisation. Personal complaints or grievances which affect an individual are covered by internal grievance procedures. The Duty to Act (Whistleblowing) Policy and Procedure should not be used for personal complaints or grievances.

This policy conforms to guidance on the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA), which encourages staff to raise concerns internally within their employing organisation in the first instance. The PIDA protects employees and encourages disclosures in the public interest.

The following are examples of what would be reported:

- a) Criminal offences
- b) Failure to comply with legal or regulatory obligations, including the duty to act (eg in connection with reporting extremism and PREVENT);
- c) Fraud and/or bribery;
- d) Actions which endanger the health or safety of staff, or safeguarding of learners or the public;
- e) Actions which cause damage to the environment;
- f) Actions which are intended to conceal any of the above.

This policy is designed to ensure that anyone who raises a concern will not suffer any form of retribution, victimisation or harassment from anyone in the workplace as a result. Providing the concern is raised in good faith, it does not matter if it later proves to be false. Concerns may be raised in confidence under this policy and the individual's identity will not be disclosed without their consent. Concerns raised anonymously are discouraged as this makes investigation difficult.

How to raise a concern

Any staff member may choose to contact a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and this may be in person or in writing. If, for whatever reason, staff feel they cannot speak with a member of SLT about their concern, or if they think their concern has not been handled properly, then staff should contact the Chair of Governors (CoG). If staff would like to raise the matter in confidence, they should declare this at the beginning so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If the matter is being dealt with confidentially, the staff member's identity will not be disclosed without permission. SFIS prefers not to receive concerns anonymously because carrying out the investigation is much easier if we know who is recording the concern and the school is unable to give feedback in this situation.

In the context of concerns regarding Safeguarding practices, staff should use the same procedures. However, where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels are available. If the concern is about a criminal

matter it should be reported to Hampshire police on 101. If it is a safeguarding concern then this should be reported either to the Local Authority Designated officer (LADO^[1B1]^[DD2]^[DD3]) or Children's Reception Team. If it is about Health and Safety, contact should be made with the health and safety team and if it is not clear, then the school improvement manager for the district should be contacted. General guidance about whistleblowing and protection for staff can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing> The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is also available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 – the line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: help@nspcc.org.uk

How SFIS will handle the matter

Once a staff member has told us of a concern, we will look into it carefully and thoroughly to assess what action, if any, should be taken. Depending on the nature of the concern, this may mean an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. We may ask the staff member how they think their concern should be dealt with. If there is a personal interest in the matter, we would ask that this is declared to us at the outset. Whilst we will try to give as much feedback as possible, we may not be able to give specific details as this could infringe the privacy of another individual.

We cannot guarantee to respond to all concerns in the way that staff might wish, but will handle the matter fairly and properly.

How to handle concerns raised under the Duty to Act Policy

Duty to Act (Whistleblowing) Procedure for Managers and SLT Members.

SFIS managers lead by example. Managers and SLT members should make clear to staff what sort of behaviour is unacceptable and practise what they preach. Staff should be encouraged to ask managers what is appropriate if they are unsure, before – not after – the event. If a manager or SLT member finds wrongdoing or a potential risk, it will^[1B4] be taken seriously and dealt with immediately.

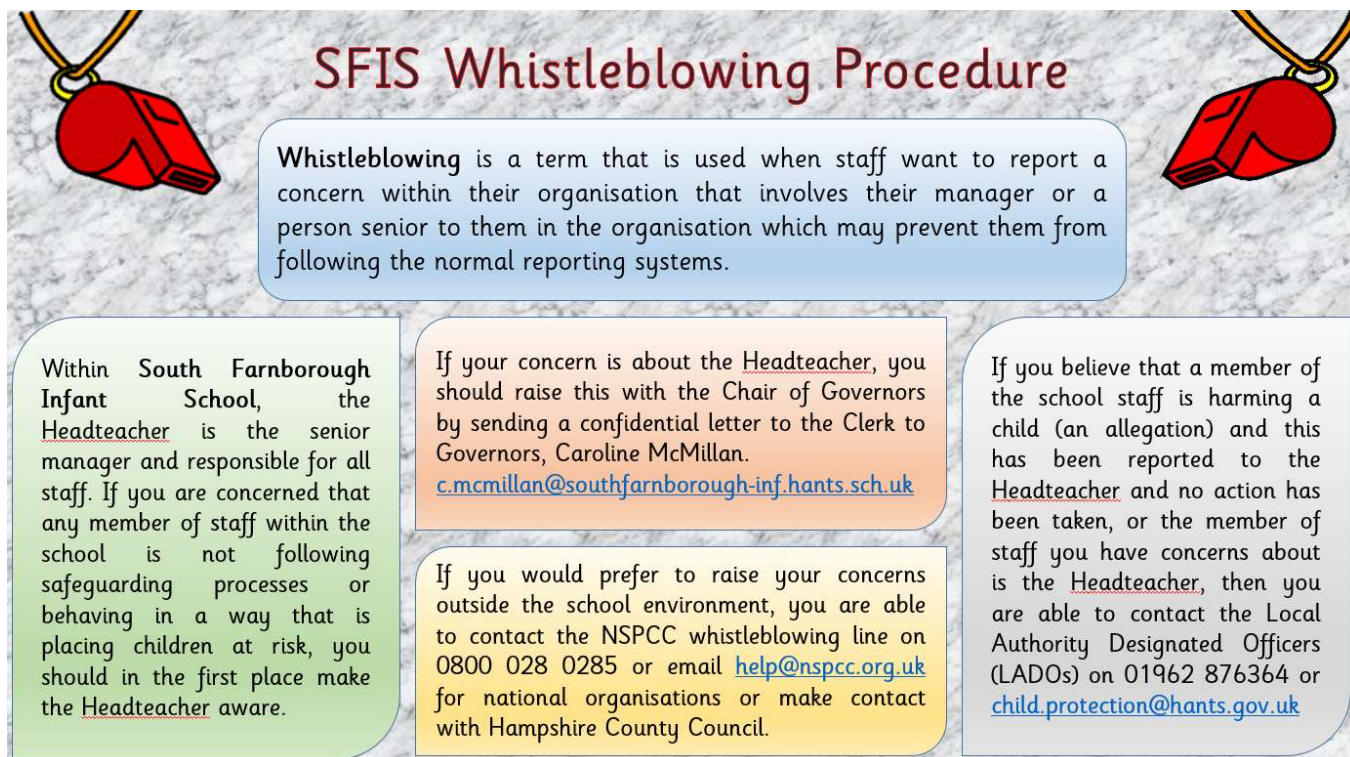
Responding to a concern

The manager will:

1. Thank the individual for raising the concern, even if they may appear to be mistaken
2. Allay any fears raised about potential impact on the member of staff's own position or career
3. Manage expectations and respect promises of confidentiality
4. Discuss reasonable timeframes for feedback with the member of staff
5. Remember there are different perspectives to every story
6. Keep a written record of the disclosure as it is made to them
7. Determine whether there are grounds for concern and investigate promptly
8. Consider who should handle the investigation and know when to ask for help. If the concern is potentially very serious or wide-reaching, refer the matter to the CoG for advice before proceeding to investigate

9. Always remember that they may have to explain how they have handled the concern. Keep written records as the investigation progresses
10. Feedback any outcome and/or remedial action they propose to take to the member of staff who has raised the concern, but be careful if this could infringe any rights or duties that may be owed to other parties
11. Put a response in writing even if verbal feedback has already been given
12. Report to the CoG the outcome of any genuine concern where malpractice or safety risk was identified and addressed.

Annex 1. Poster located around the school



The poster is titled "SFIS Whistleblowing Procedure" in a large, bold, red font. It features two red whistle icons, one on the left and one on the right, hanging from yellow ropes. The background is a light, textured grey. The main definition of whistleblowing is in a light blue box. Below this, there are three colored boxes (green, orange, and grey) providing specific reporting channels.

SFIS Whistleblowing Procedure

Whistleblowing is a term that is used when staff want to report a concern within their organisation that involves their manager or a person senior to them in the organisation which may prevent them from following the normal reporting systems.

Within South Farnborough Infant School, the Headteacher is the senior manager and responsible for all staff. If you are concerned that any member of staff within the school is not following safeguarding processes or behaving in a way that is placing children at risk, you should in the first place make the Headteacher aware.

If your concern is about the Headteacher, you should raise this with the Chair of Governors by sending a confidential letter to the Clerk to Governors, Caroline McMillan.
c.mcmillan@southfarnborough-inf.hants.sch.uk

If you would prefer to raise your concerns outside the school environment, you are able to contact the NSPCC whistleblowing line on 0800 028 0285 or email help@nspcc.org.uk for national organisations or make contact with Hampshire County Council.

If you believe that a member of the school staff is harming a child (an allegation) and this has been reported to the Headteacher and no action has been taken, or the member of staff you have concerns about is the Headteacher, then you are able to contact the Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs) on 01962 876364 or child.protection@hants.gov.uk