

NEW FOREST CARE EDUCATION

Whistle Blowing Policy

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This policy applies to all areas of New Forest Care Education’s business, including Registered Independent Schools, Alternative Provisions, Farms, Post-16 and all other Educational Services.

1.Introduction

This policy has been developed in response to the introduction of the public interest Disclosure Act 1998 which protects employees that make disclosures in the public interest.

2.Rational and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage employees to feel confident in raising serious concerns.
- Provide a means for employees to raise serious concerns and receive feedback resulting actions.
- Reassure employees that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation if they have made a disclosure in good faith.

This policy does not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to New Forest Care Education (NFCE) in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

3.Definition of whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is “in the public interest”. Examples of whistle-blowing include (but aren’t limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Students’ or staffs’ health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest
- Damage to the environment

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the company count as whistle-blowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistle-blowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

When staff have a concern, they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures.

4.Procedure and Guidance

The confidential reporting procedure aims to protect individuals that make disclosures in the public interest. It does not replace the company's grievance procedure which should be used to resolve personal grievances in the workplace.

If an employee has a serious concern, New Forest Care Education (New Forest Care Ltd.) encourages that person, irrespective of the level of alleged malpractice, to raise the issue in the first instance with their line manager.

If the employee does not feel that this is appropriate, they may raise the matter with the next level, Member of SLT, Head of School, Headteacher or Human Resources Manager (John Mitchell). The employee should put all concerns in writing.

New Forest Care Education recognises that in certain circumstances, matters may be difficult to raise because of the concern over the possible consequences. New Forest Care Education is committed to ensuring that any issues raised will be treated in the strictest confidence and, provided that the disclosure is made in good faith, no one making such a disclosure will be treated in any detrimental manner.

If any employee attempts to deter another employee from making a disclosure, victimise them in any way, or treats them in a detrimental manner, they will be dealt with under the company's disciplinary procedures.

Outcome of the investigation

Once the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the investigating person(s) will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether or not any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority or police.

They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.

Beyond the immediate actions, the headteacher, Director of Education and other staff if necessary, will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

5.Malicious or vexatious allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an issue. If an allegation is made in good faith, but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, New Forest Care Education (New Forest Care Ltd.) will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

6.Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff grievance policy
- Complaints procedure
- Child protection policy