

Whistleblowing Policy

West Nottinghamshire College seeks to achieve the highest possible standards of probity and honesty in all of its activities.

The College is committed to the delivery of its vision and mission and in doing so must demonstrate full accountability. Whilst the College has in place rules, regulations, quality standards and procedures to ensure that the highest standards of conduct and commitment are followed, irregularities, wrong-doing or serious failures in standards may occur.

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to the College's activities. This includes bribery, fraud or other criminal activity, miscarriages of justice, health and safety risks, damage to the environment and any breach of legal or professional obligations. The College is committed to identifying and removing such malpractice in the delivery of its responsibilities. The greatest deterrent to malpractice or wrongdoing is the probability that it will be reported and investigated vigorously, that those who are responsible for it will be punished and that the matter will be promptly remedied. Any suspected wrongdoing should be reported as soon as possible.

This Policy sets out a clear statement that any malpractice or wrongdoing by members of the Governing Body, employees or third parties (including sub-contractors) reported to the College will be swiftly and thoroughly investigated. The College will also look at ways to ensure that such malpractice or wrongdoing can be prevented for the future.

Scope of the Policy

This Policy provides all employees, contractors, casual workers, agency workers, sub-contractors and members of the Governing Body with:

- A framework within which to raise concerns and receive feedback on any actions taken in relation to allegations under this policy
- Assurances that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith

This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to supplement rather than to replace the existing grievance procedures as set out within College policies and procedures whereby employees of the College may already raise complaints or matters of genuine concern.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and the College may amend it at any time.

Supporting Statements

This policy is made in accordance with Part IVA of the Employment Rights Act 1996, which provides legal protection for employees who make any disclosure of information about illegal practices in the workplace.

If any member of the Corporation or staff or a student has a genuine and legitimate concern about a potentially fraudulent, corrupt or irregular activities within the College, these should be raised within an open and supportive environment.

Once a concern or allegation has been formally raised with the College a prompt and impartial investigation will be conducted by one or more individuals not directly involved in, or compromised by, the allegation.

The College hopes that individuals will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. Completely anonymous disclosures are difficult to investigate. If an individual wants to raise a concern confidentially, the College will make every effort to keep their identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating the individual's concern.

The College aims to encourage openness and will support whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment whatsoever as a result of raising a genuine concern. If an individual believes that they have suffered any such treatment, they should inform the College immediately.

Individuals must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. Any individual involved in such conduct may be subject to disciplinary action (and in some cases the whistleblower could have a right to sue that individual personally in an employment tribunal).

If the College concludes that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower may be subject to disciplinary action.

The police or other authorities will be informed if there are grounds for suspecting criminal activity.

In most cases the College anticipates that individuals should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally. However, the law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for an individual to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. The College strongly encourages individuals to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. Public Concern at Work is a charity that operates a confidential helpline. Public Concern at Work whistleblowing Advice Line is 020 7404 6609 or alternatively they can be contacted via email whistle@pcaw.org.uk. For further information please visit their website: <http://www.pcaw.co.uk/>.

Implementation Procedures

Raising a concern or making an allegation

The procedure allows for referral to a number of specified post holders so that if necessary an allegation can be made against any member of staff or the Corporation.

Allegation against:

Any committee of the Corporation
Chair of the Corporation
Individual member of the Corporation

Allegation should be communicated to:

Chair of Audit Committee via the Clerk
Chair of Audit Committee via the Clerk
Chair of the Corporation via the Clerk

Principal
Member of the senior management team
Any other member of staff

Chair of the Corporation via the Clerk
Principal
Senior management team line manager or the
Human Resources Director

Form of allegation

An allegation may be made in writing or orally to the person designated above. If the allegation is made orally, then the designated person should record full details of the statements and allegation made. He or she should send a written acknowledgement to the person making the allegation. All correspondence will be sent to the home of the person making the allegation unless the use of internal mail is requested.

Investigation of the allegation

The designated person is responsible for the investigation of the allegation and will have access to the principal and the governing body as appropriate. The designated person will determine the most appropriate method of investigation which may include delegation to an employee with appropriate professional or technical qualifications or referred to an outside body.

The person making the allegation may be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative at any interviews that are arranged in relation to the allegation. Any such companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

Reporting to the Corporation Board

The outcome of any investigation undertaken will be reported to the Audit Committee, Chairman and Corporation Board.