**Whistle Blowing Policy**

CEDAR Prime is committed to maintaining a culture of openness, accountability and integrity. The project seeks to ensure staff feel secure in raising concerns about any act which may harm individuals or undermine them.

The Project has adopted this Whistle Blowing policy to provide clear guidance to those who may need to raise concerns. This policy and procedure has been prepared in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and DfE guidance for schools.

CEDAR Prime expects its staff, and others involved in the work of the Project, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Projects work to come forward and raise their concerns.

A member of staff may be the first person to realise that there could be something seriously wrong within the project. However, they may feel that speaking up would be disloyal to colleagues or to the school. They may also fear harassment or victimisation.

This policy aims to:

• encourage staff to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns.

• provide avenues for staff to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken.

• ensure that staff receive a response to their concerns and that they are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied.

• reassure staff that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have a reasonable belief that they have raised any concern in good faith.

**Application of policy**
All employees of Cedar Prime have a responsibility for whistleblowing. The purpose of this policy and procedure is to make it clear that employees can raise concerns in confidence without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination, or disadvantage. Employees are encouraged to raise serious concerns in the first instance within the Project rather than overlooking a problem or ‘blowing the whistle’ outside, and it is preferred that the matter is raised when it is just a concern rather than waiting for proof.

This policy and procedure applies to all employees and those working for Cedar Prime, for example, agency staff. It also covers those providing services under a contract and organisations working in partnership with Cedar Prime.

Cedar Prime recognises that employees may wish to seek advice and be supported by their trade union representative when raising a concern and acknowledges and endorses the role trade union representatives play in this area.

This policy should be used for concerns about:-

* Any unlawful act, whether criminal or a breach of civil law;
* Maladministration, as defined by the Local Government Ombudsman
* Breach of any statutory code of practice
* Breach of, or failure to implement or comply with, Financial Regulations
* Any failure to comply with appropriate professional standards
* Fraud, corruption, or dishonesty
* Actions which are likely to cause physical/mental/psychological danger to any
* person, or to give rise to a risk of significant damage to pro
* Abuse of power, or the use of the school’s powers and authority for any
* unauthorised or ulterior purpose
* Discriminatory behaviour.

**Protection**

It can be difficult for an employee or worker to make the decision to report a concern. If a concern is raised in good faith and based on reasonable belief, there should be

* nothing to fear.
* Cedar Prime will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal

pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect an individual when they raise a concern even if they are genuinely mistaken in their concerns. Any harassment or victimisation of a whistleblower would result in disciplinary action against the person responsible.

Under The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, workers are protected from dismissal or other detrimental action as long as they follow their employers whistle blowing procedure. Any investigations arising from whistleblowing will not influence or be influenced by any other procedures to which an employee may be subject.

**How to raise a concern**

It is hoped that in most cases an employee/worker will feel able to raise any concerns internally with the project leader, speaking to them in person or putting the matter in writing if they prefer. They may be able to agree on a way of resolving a concern quickly and effectively.

The Project Leader will meet with the employee/worker as soon as practicable to discuss their concern, recording sufficient details to enable the matter to be thoroughly investigated. As a minimum, they will record the name of the employee/worker but also indicate whether the individual wishes his or her identity to remain confidential and the nature of the concern. It may not always be possible to maintain confidentiality and the Project Leader should explain this to the employee/worker.

In such instances worker will have the choice of either withdrawing or agreeing to his/her identity becoming known to enable the concern to be effectively dealt with.

The employee may bring a colleague or trade union representative to any meetings under this policy. The confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation must be respected.

The Project leader will take notes and produce a written summary of the concern raised and provide the employee/worker with a copy as soon as practicable after the meeting, along with an indication of how they propose to deal with the matter, where possible.

The Project leader may consider it appropriate to refer the concern to an external agency for consideration in advance of any internal investigation. This may be appropriate where concerns about child safeguarding, potential criminal activity or unsafe working practices are raised. Where this is deemed appropriate, no further internal investigation should be undertaken until clearance is given.

If it is concluded that an employee/worker has made false allegations maliciously, in bad faith or with a view to personal gain, they will be subject to disciplinary action under the school’s disciplinary policy and procedure. Whilst it cannot always be guaranteed that the outcome will be in line with the employee’s/worker’s expectation, concerns will be dealt with fairly and in an appropriate way. There is no right of appeal against any decisions taken under this policy and procedure.

**External disclosure**

Workers who believe that the matter has not been taken seriously or is being covered up may choose to report the concern externally to an appropriate body, details of which are shown below:

The Local Authority

Prescribed Person or Body (eg. Ofsted, Education Funding Agency, Children Commissioner or NSPCC -

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies.

**Confidentiality**

The CEDAR Prime view confidentiality as a two-way process and will endeavour to maintain this approach, though they recognise this cannot always be guaranteed. In return we would expect concerns the employee/worker has raised through this policy will remain equally confidential until there has been an opportunity for their assessment.

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November 2023