



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

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Introduction

At work, you might notice things that seem wrong or unsafe. These could include illegal actions, misuse of money, or risks to people or the environment. It's not always clear what to do in these situations. You might feel unsure about raising the issue or worry about the reaction. You might also think it's not your responsibility or that you need proof before speaking up.

This policy is here to guide you. It explains how to raise concerns early, safely, and in the right way. Whether you are a school employee or someone else working in our schools, you have a duty to report these issues and the school has a duty to listen. We want to hear from you and will support you when you speak up.

If your concern is genuine, we encourage you to share it without waiting for full proof. By using this policy, you help us keep the school safe and well-managed.

When to Use This Policy

This policy is for concerns that affect the school, its staff, pupils, the environment or the public. It is not for personal issues, such as disputes about your job or how you are treated. Those should be addressed through the **Peak Edge Grievance Policy and Procedure**, which you can access at the school.

Examples of concerns covered by this policy include:

- Illegal activities.
- Misuse of school funds or resources.
- Risks to pupils, staff, or the environment.
- Breaking school rules or ethical standards.
- Hiding any of the above issues.

Appendix 1 provides some examples of concerns that may be raised under this policy. If you're unsure whether your concern fits, raise it anyway. We will guide you on what to do next.

Our Responsibilities

Your Safety

We understand that reporting concerns can feel risky. If you share a genuine concern under this policy, you will be protected:

- **As an employee:** You cannot lose your job for making the disclosure. Any dismissal for this reason will be considered automatically unfair.

- **As a worker¹:** You are protected from unfair treatment, such as being demoted, denied promotions, reassigned, relocated, bullied, harassed, victimised, or excluded.

These protections apply even after you leave the school.

If you act in good faith but are mistaken, you are still protected. However, if you knowingly raise false concerns, we may take disciplinary action.

Confidentiality

If you want to stay anonymous, we will do our best to respect your wishes. However, it can be harder to investigate or keep you updated if we don't know your identity. If we need to share your identity during an investigation, we will ask for your permission first.

Support in Meetings

You have the right to bring someone with you to any meeting related to your concern. This could be a trade union representative or a colleague who is not involved in the issue.

How to Raise a Concern

Ways to Report

You can report your concern in writing, by email, over the phone, or in person. Written reports often work best because they allow you to explain the situation clearly and keep a record for yourself. When writing your report, include:

- The background of your concern.
- Key details, such as names, dates, and locations.
- Why you believe it's important to act.

If you prefer to speak, you can arrange a meeting or phone call with the appropriate person.

Who to Contact

Start by contacting your line manager or Headteacher. If the issue involves them, you can go to:

- The **Chair of Governors** or the **Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Peak Edge**.
- Relevant external bodies, like the Department of Education, the police, or a legal advisor.

¹ Under this policy, the term 'worker' may apply to you if you are not an employee but still perform work at one of the schools in our Trust. This could include roles such as volunteering or supply cover work.

The school prefers you to raise concerns internally, but if you need to contact an outside agency, ensure you don't share confidential information without checking first. There is a list of useful contacts at the end of this policy in Appendix 4 which may help you in knowing who to contact.

What Happens After You Report a Concern?

When you report a concern, the school or Trust will follow these steps:

1. Acknowledgement

You will receive written confirmation that your concern has been received within ten working days. This will include:

- A summary of how your concern will be handled.
- An estimated timeline for addressing the issue.
- A point of contact for further questions or updates.

2. Initial Review

The school will make preliminary checks to decide whether an investigation is needed. If the concern doesn't fit under this policy, we'll let you know and explain why. If it does fit, we'll move forward with an investigation.

3. Investigation Process

If an investigation is needed:

- A responsible investigator will be appointed to look into the issue. Usually the Headteacher and CEO will decide who will be the responsible investigator unless the concern is about them. You will be told their name and how long the process is expected to take.
- The investigator may ask you for more details or evidence. If needed, you might also provide a witness statement.
- You will be updated every 28 days about the progress of the investigation.

Investigations might involve:

- An internal review by school or Trust staff.
- Referrals to external bodies, like the police or auditors.
- An independent inquiry if the issue is serious or complex. We might ask someone who does not work for the Trust to help us with this.

4. Outcome

At the end of the investigation:

- A written report will summarise the findings, any actions taken, and whether your concern was substantiated.
- If the investigation results in further action under another policy (e.g., disciplinary procedures), you will be informed when your involvement ends.
- If no further action is taken, you will be told why.

Due to confidentiality laws, we may not always be able to share full details, especially if the issue involves other people's personal information.

5. Support During and After

If you are asked to provide evidence or attend a meeting, you can bring a trade union representative or colleague. The school will aim to minimise any stress or inconvenience caused by your involvement.

Appendix 1: Examples of Concerns

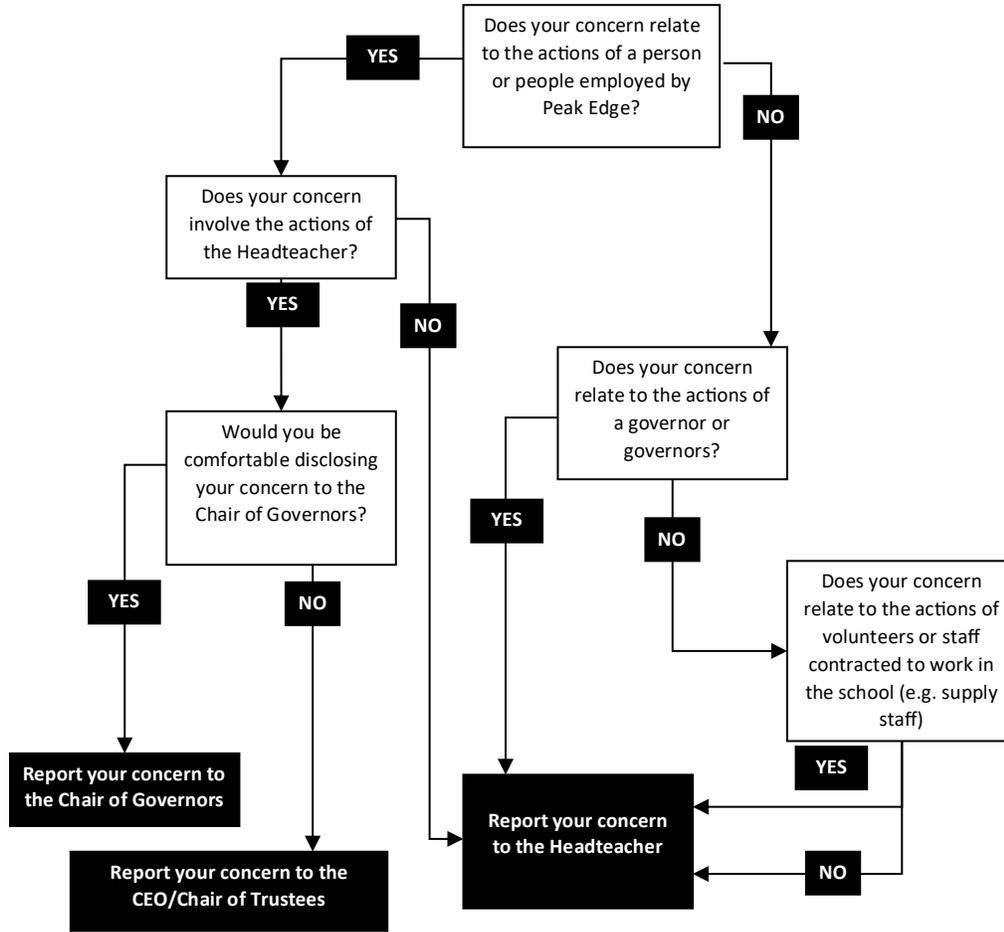
Here are some examples of concerns that may be raised under this policy. This list is not exhaustive, so if you're unsure, report your concern anyway.

- **Child safety:** Staff behaviour or school practices that put children at risk, such as ignoring safeguarding procedures.
- **Financial misconduct:** Fraud, theft, or misuse of school funds or resources.
- **Unethical behaviour:** Taking bribes, giving unfair advantages, or using confidential information inappropriately.
- **Health and safety:** Ignoring safety regulations, causing hazards, or exposing others to danger.
- **Abuse or discrimination:** Bullying, harassment, or discriminatory behaviour toward staff, pupils, or visitors.
- **Environmental risks:** Actions that harm the environment, such as improper disposal of chemicals.
- **Poor management practices:** Leadership decisions that risk pupils' welfare, violate school policies, or harm staff morale.
- **Professional misconduct:** Teachers or staff acting unethically, including inappropriate behaviour with pupils or falsifying records.
- **Policy violations:** Deliberate breaches of school policies, codes of conduct, or legal obligations.
- **Covering up wrongdoing:** Attempts to hide or falsify evidence related to any of the above concerns.

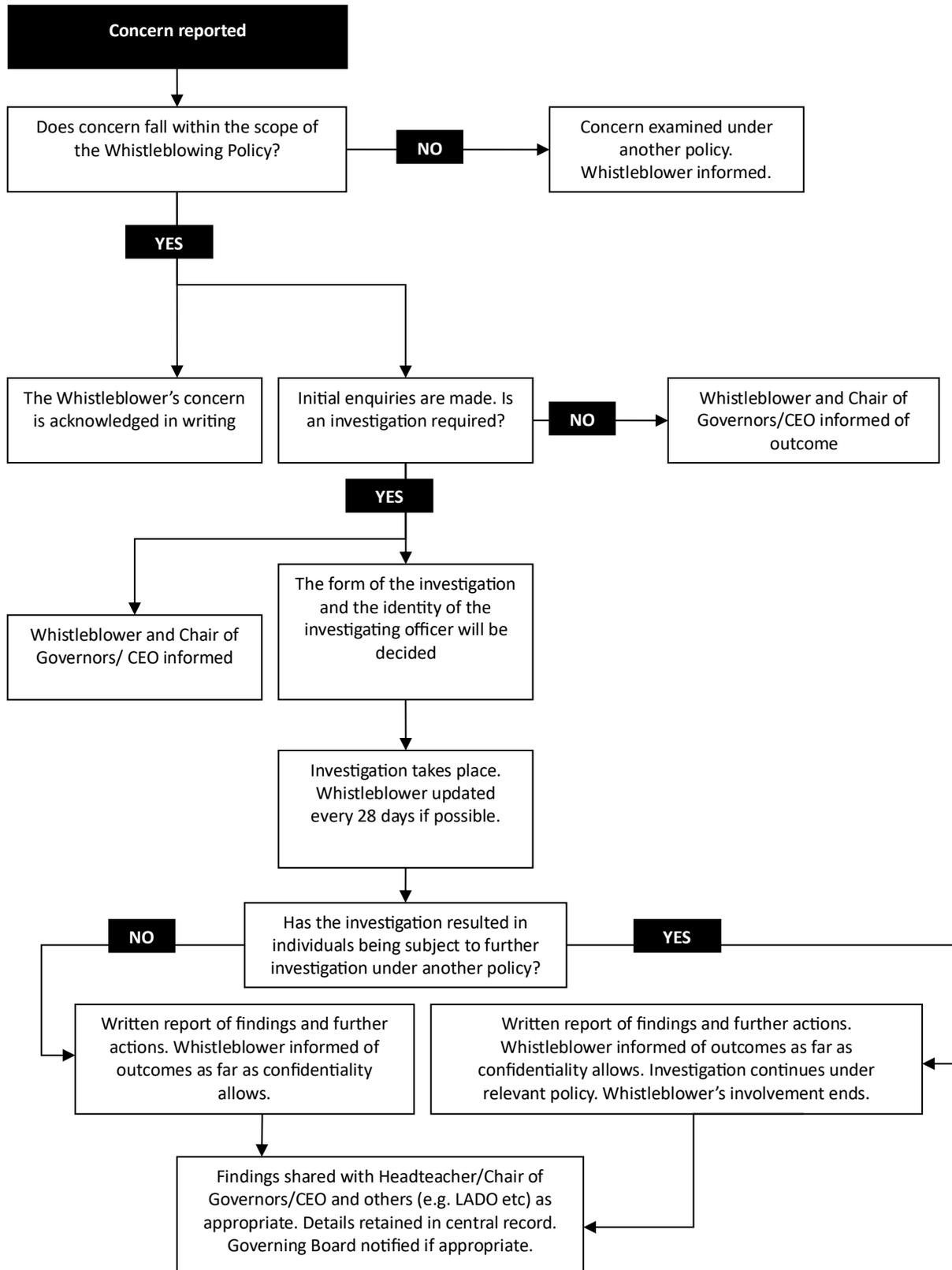
If you notice something that you believe is wrong, even if it's not on this list, raise your concern.

Appendix 2: Reporting concerns through the Whistleblowing Policy

NB Headteachers should report all concerns raised to the CEO (or Chair of Trustees if it is about the CEO).



Appendix 3: Managing a concern through the Whistleblowing Policy



Appendix 4: Useful contacts

Who or what is the concern about?	How you should contact someone
An employment issue	<p>Call or write to the Headteacher of the school using the contact information on the school website.</p> <p>Contact the Trust by using the enquiry form on the Trust website at https://peakedge.org.uk/contact/</p>
An educational issue	<p>Call or write to the Headteacher of the school using the contact information on the school website.</p> <p>Contact the Trust by using the enquiry form on the Trust website at https://peakedge.org.uk/contact/</p>
A governance issue	<p>Call or write to the Chair of Governors of the school using the contact information on the school website.</p> <p>Contact the Trust by using the enquiry form on the Trust website at https://peakedge.org.uk/contact/</p>
A financial issue	<p>Contact the Trust by using the enquiry form on the Trust website at https://peakedge.org.uk/contact/</p>
A child safety issue	<p>Contact the Local Authority Designated Officer by calling 0114 2734934</p>